DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 419 985 CE 076 698

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TITLE Culture Matters. Factors Affecting the Outcomes of Participation in Vocational Education and Training by Australian Indigenous Peoples.
INSTITUTION Technology Univ.-Sydney, Broadway (Australia). Research Centre for Vocational Education and Training.
SPONS AGENCY Australian National Training Authority, Brisbane.
ISBN ISBN-1-86365-331-7
PUB DATE 1996-00-00
NOTE 212p.; For a related report, see CE 076 697.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research (143)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC09 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Adult Basic Education; Adult Literacy; *Cultural Differences; Cultural Pluralism; Delivery Systems; Educational Needs; English (Second Language); Enrollment; Foreign Countries; *Indigenous Populations; Individual Needs; Instructional Effectiveness; Literacy Education; *Outcomes of Education; *Performance Factors; Postsecondary Education; Questionnaires; Rural Areas; Rural Education; Secondary Education; Student Attitudes; Student Characteristics; Systems Approach; Teacher Attitudes; Urban Areas; Urban Education; *Vocational Education
IDENTIFIERS Aboriginal Schools (Australia); *Australia (Torres Strait); *TAFE (Australia)

ABSTRACT

The factors affecting the outcomes of indigenous Australians' participation in vocational education and training (VET) were examined in a study in which 7 Aboriginal researchers in 5 Australian states and territories interviewed 70 indigenous Australians enrolled in VET and 48 coordinators and teachers in technical and further education (TAFE) colleges, independent Aboriginal providers, and universities with significant programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in 1994. The study focused on the following: pathways to VET; learners' issues and concerns; institutional issues and provider views; literacy, language, and learning; and effective course delivery in VET. Seven guiding principles for improved VET course delivery to indigenous Australians were identified. VET providers were encouraged to adopt the concept of course delivery as a cross-cultural activity as their rationale for planing, developing, and evaluating programs for indigenous Australians. (The bibliography contains 51 references. Appended are the following: educational indicators for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander profile for local government areas in eastern Australia; learner interview schedule; summary of learner characteristics; institution interview schedule; list of TAFE institutions with the highest enrollments of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in 1993; summary of institutions interviewed; and examples of data management layouts.) (MN)

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Culture Matters

Factors affecting the outcomes of participation in vocational education and training by Australian Indigenous Peoples

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A national centre supported by the Research Advisory Council of the Australian National Training Authority

Culture Matters

Factors affecting the outcomes of participation in vocational education and training by Australian Indigenous Peoples

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Culture Matters Main Report ISBN 1 86365 331 7
Culture Matters Community Report ISBN 1 86365 330 9

This project has been assisted by the
Commonwealth Government through
the Research Advisory Council of the
Australian National Training Authority

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Acknowledgments

This project has been a labour-intensive one over some eighteen months. It could not have been completed without the contributions of many people.

The research team's greatest debt is to the Aboriginal researchers who were the mainstay of the research strategy, and they are acknowledged in the authorship. They carried out all of the field work and were the main way in which we consulted with Aboriginal communities throughout the project. The experience of collaborative research, where the team and its researchers learned from each other in a 'two-way' process, has been a valuable aspect of the project. The advisory committee provided valuable advice in planning the fieldwork.

The impetus to research the 'institutional issues' came from Michael McDaniel and he helped to shape the interpretive and collaborative direction of the work in its earlier stages and his critique of Aboriginal education has been a touchstone of the final report. Jenny Newman also contributed her ideas after joining the School as the co-ordinator of the School's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander program. Wendy Brady drafted the literature review in Chapter 2.

Bob Morgan, Director, Jumbunna Centre for Australian Indigenous Studies, Education and Research at UTS was involved at the proposal and planning stages and ensured the research kept a focus on the cultural issues. Pam Gill and Joan Tranter of the Aboriginal Development Division, NSW TAFE Commission gave valuable advice on the policy and research issues.

The support of the Research Centre for Vocational Education and Training, particularly the Director, Professor Rod McDonald, and the Research Manager, Delia Mazzina, is greatly appreciated. Maree Joulian of the School of Adult Education again helped to bring another report into existence on the desk-top. Matthew Buchanan and Mez Egg wrote the companion Community Report for which Dean Beale produced the cover art work.

Finally, the Research Advisory Council of ANTA in funding the proposal made the project possible and generously supported an extension of time. We would like to thank the Council, the Chair, Dr Gregor Ramsey and the Research Manager, Karen Whittingham for their support.

Glossary of Terms

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ACEG	Aboriginal Education Consultative Group
ACTRAC	Australian Committee on Training Curriculum
ACTU	Australian Council of Trade Unions
AEC	Australian Education Council
AGPS	Australian Government Publishing Service
ALLP	Australian Language and Literacy Policy
AMES	Adult Migrant English (formerly Education) Service
ANTA	Australian National Training Authority
ANTARAC	Research Advisory Council, ANTA
ASF	Australian Skills Framework
ATSI	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
ATSIC	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission
BVET	Board of Vocational Education and Training, NSW
CAE	College of Advanced Education
CALM	Conservation, Agriculture and Land Management (NSW)
CBT	Competency Based Training
CDEP	Community Development Employment Program
CES	Commonwealth Employment Service
CTEP	Community Training and Employment Program (NSW)
DEET	Department of Employment, Education and Training (Federal)
DSS	Department of Social Security
EEO	Equal Employment Opportunity
ESFC	Employment and Skills Formation Council
ESL	English as a Second Language
IAD	Institute for Aboriginal Development
MCEETYA	Ministerial Council on Employment, Education and Training and Youth Affairs
NATSIEP	National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy
NCVER	National Centre for Vocational Education Research
NFROT	National Framework for the Recognition of Training
NLLIA	National Languages and Literacy Institute of Australia
NTB	National Training Board
TAFE	Technical and Further Education
TAP	Training for Aboriginal People
VET	Vocational Education and Training

Summary Report and Recommendations

For at least twenty years, a stream of government policies has pressed Australian education and training institutions to respond to the educational needs of Australia's indigenous peoples. These efforts have undoubtedly led to increased access and participation and other desirable outcomes including forms of delivery which acknowledge the culture and identity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

However, there is a need for better information about those factors which affect access, participation and success rates of indigenous Australians. Practitioners in TAFE colleges and universities have expressed the need for ways to overcome the alienating effects of institutional requirements on their Aboriginal students and ways of improving the cultural relevance and quality of course delivery.

We are only beginning to understand how to design and manage education and training that *both* affirms the culture of indigenous Australians *and* delivers to them quality outcomes. The advent of national training reform has increased the need to understand, in a more systematic and coherent way, what factors 'make a difference' to the outcomes of participation in vocational education and training.

This summary report describes the findings of a research project to investigate the question: *What factors affect the outcomes of participation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people? And what might be the implications for policy and practice of a more comprehensive understanding of those factors?*

The project was funded by the Research Advisory Council of the Australian National Training Authority and was conducted by Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal members of research team based in the Research Centre for Vocational Education and Training at the University of Technology Sydney.

Objectives

The project explored four broad questions about factors affecting the outcomes of participation of indigenous Australians:

- What are the main factors affecting outcomes, and how do institutions see these factors? What is the range of models of delivery of VET, and to what extent do they vary according to urban, regional and rural and remote contexts?
- What are the main concerns and issues of students experiencing these modes of delivery, in areas such as access and entry requirements, course design, the cultural

appropriateness of teaching and learning experiences, the adequacy of support and assistance, and assessment practices?

- What are typical VET pathways taken by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and what do these indicate about gaps which may exist between course outcomes at early stages of learning, and the competency requirements of later stages?
- What are the main language and literacy issues in the delivery of VET and how may they be understood in relation to questions of access, course design, culturally inclusive curriculum and assessment practices and other aspects of course delivery?

These directions set a broad agenda, leaving the research to find a unifying principle in the need to understand the complexity of factors affecting outcomes of participation and to acknowledge the diversity of contexts of delivery. The research attempted to recognise the complexities around the term 'culture'. In exploring factors affecting participation of indigenous Australians, the research was wary of the way 'cultural difference' of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people can be used to shift responsibility for failure from institutional and systems practices on to Aboriginal people. 'Culture' becomes a concept by means of which the 'victim' is blamed for inadequate service provision (Cope et al. 1995).

The research therefore had a guiding definition of culture to underpin its exploration of the 'cultural issues'. The definition from the report on *Cultural Understanding: Eighth Key Competency* was used to capture the complex and dynamic nature of culture:

> Culture is socially created forms of human interaction and cohesion. It arises through socialisation and learning; it is neither natural nor fixed. Culture entails multiple personal and social meanings, relationships, practices and values.
>
> There are no fixed boundaries to cultures and cultures are always changing. Any individual lives in and between many different cultures: the culture of the workplace; the culture of educational institutions; culture as ethnic background; culture as aspiration, interest or inclination. In this sense, all our cultures have multiple layers, each layer in a complex and dynamic relation to the other. (National Languages and Literacy Institute of Australia (NLLIA), 1994:14).

The research also adopted a related principle of the acknowledgment of the diversity of Aboriginal cultures or Aboriginality. It follows from this concept of culture that the word 'Aboriginality' encompasses a range of life worlds and cultural experiences related to people's childhood, community, education and work experiences.

Research process

The research explored how educational institutions were accommodating Aboriginal culture and identity, as well as how Aboriginal students were experiencing their courses in mainstream institutions. Survey methodology was rejected as a culturally inappropriate way to explore the views of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people because of the history of research making them 'objects for scientific study' and because such methods have been used to distort the views of indigenous Australians.

An interpretive research process was developed collaboratively by Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal members of the research team and with a group of indigenous researchers

employed to conduct personal and telephone interviews with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and teachers and co-ordinators in a range of VET providers including universities.

The learner interview mapped the students' educational and life journeys before exploring their experiences of a current or recent course and language and literacy issues. The interviews were reported in ways that allowed Aboriginal voices to be heard, achieving a greater understanding of indigenous perspectives on the factors affecting the outcomes of VET courses. A parallel series of provider interviews explored the experiences of those who provide significant Aboriginal programs. The research also included a review of relevant policies on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander policies on education and training and an analysis of data on participation.

Seventy interviews were conducted by seven Aboriginal researchers in five states or territories (NSW, Queensland, South Australia and Western Australia and the Northern Territory). Researchers selected respondents according to categories of age, sex and employment. The learner sample was limited by the fact that it did not explore the views of indigenous Australians who dropped out or failed; people who had taken labour market programs or community-based courses, people who had not taken any educational pathway, and younger males and prisoners.

Forty-eight (48) interviews were conducted by telephone with co-ordinators and teachers in TAFE colleges, independent Aboriginal providers and universities which in 1994 had significant programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Three-quarters of the providers were indigenous Australians. The research therefore represents a range of views of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, all of whom had significant and recent experience of formal education and training.

Pathways to VET

The analysis of learner pathways suggests a number of factors which affect the outcomes of the participation of indigenous Australian students in vocational education and training. Pathways describe the intersections of life and educational experiences, for example:

> Alice was born in north western NSW and is nearly fifty. She went to the mission school but was excluded from high school because she was Aboriginal. She worked as a domestic in the town and then moved to Sydney where she did factory work and later was married. Moving to the north coast she worked briefly in TAFE and then moved back home to raise her family, doing seasonal work such as cotton chipping for years. She then helped in a women's refuge, doing on the job training and becoming permanent, and assisted at the preschool. At about forty years of age, she started general skills in TAFE and is currently doing her Certificate in Adult Further Education. (Alice, 14).

> Malcolm went to school in a 'sugar belt' town in northern Queensland and worked in the cane-fields from 14 years of age. Later he started a business management course in TAFE but had to drop out after a few weeks because of family commitments. He then spent more years in labouring work, and having moved to Brisbane, completed a general skills course. He went back to labouring but an injury to his back made him unable to do physical work. He wants to do administrative work and enrolled in his current pre-tertiary course to gain the skills for university study. (Malcolm, 276).

Such pathway stories summarise complex individual experiences but they clearly indicate some of the factors that influence indigenous Australians' participation in VET. These include:

- Entry to the labour market comes before education and training for many people. Older people are more likely to enter education later in life for various reasons including past barriers to entry due to racial discrimination and economic circumstances, where they had to support families and where full-time study was non-existent.
- A desire to do more for other Aboriginal people can lead to work in community organisations and this can lead to vocational education and training to develop appropriate levels of skill, for example in mental health or drug and alcohol work or education.
- Older people may feel that it is time to catch up on education that they missed out on early in life, and feel a strong need to provide role models of educational success for younger people.
- A number of individuals had access to training through apprenticeships or other vocational training such as nursing or secretarial work.
- The existence of Aboriginal employment strategies has created work opportunities linked to training for individuals, especially in allowing them to enter health, education or welfare work in either community organisations or government services.
- In comparison to their elders, younger people are more likely to have started education and training straight after school. They have been able to benefit early in their lives from programs set up specifically for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- Aboriginal people use courses of various kinds to provide bridges between work or unemployment and participation in further education and training. This refers not only to bridging courses so-named, but also to labour market programs and general education courses, such as CABE, which people use as stepping stones.

The educational and life journeys of indigenous Australians have been influenced by a range of social and economic factors and by the policy decisions of government. There are strong linkages between access to work, particularly in community or government employment, and access to education and training. Work opportunities, as well as the ability to access vocational education and training have been constrained by changing employment patterns and the changing nature of work, especially for older students. The ability for indigenous people to access education and training has clearly been influenced by Aboriginal education and employment policies having this objective.

Learners' issues and concerns

The learner interviews showed that the over-riding factor identified by students for achieving success is a recognition of their Aboriginality, at each stage of the educational process. Students express satisfaction with courses where this recognition occurs:

- where the course is either specifically designed for Indigenous people or contains a significant component of Indigenous Australian studies or perspectives;
- where all or most students in that course are Indigenous people;
- where staff are Indigenous or if not, are sensitive and aware of the needs of Indigenous Australians;
- where the mode of the course and the delivery of content recognise the needs of the students;
- where assessments are negotiable and time schedules are flexible to take account of family priorities;
- where Indigenous support is provided on-campus, and the students' family and community are supportive.

When all or some of these factors apply, students experience success and frequently recommend the course to others, and consider further education or training. In many cases, the existence of some of these factors can offset the lack of others; for example in a course where there are few Aboriginal students, the support from an Aboriginal Unit on campus becomes very important. Similarly, in a course where there is little flexibility for negotiating time frames which allow students to meet their family obligations, the support of other students, family and community becomes increasingly important. In some instances students have dropped out of courses where they felt isolated and pressured, faced with a heavy workload or competing demands on their time, with little recognition of their individual needs as Aboriginal people. For others, experiencing conflicts with family or community members caused students to feel alienated from those whose support is often essential for success.

Overall, students interviewed in this report have succeeded in moving further along their educational and training pathway, and most reflect on their sense of personal growth or increased vocational opportunity as a result of their courses. Some are already undertaking further study. Given the commitment of institutions to access and equity, it is useful to draw on students' stories to indicate ways that teaching and administrative staff in institutions can demonstrate a sensitivity to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. This may ensure positive experiences from the earliest stages of the information dissemination process when students find out about available courses, in the enrolment, orientation and settling in periods, to providing culturally appropriate course content and methods of delivery, and negotiable and flexible assessment tasks and time frames.

Institutional issues and provider views

Providers clearly identified a number of key factors which contribute to successful outcomes for indigenous Australians. These include:

- The institution recognises and adapts to the student's Aboriginality at each stage of the educational experience.

This was the most critical of factors identified. Recognition of the student's Aboriginality can be achieved through entry requirements which acknowledge and emphasise the student's own experiences; culturally inclusive pedagogy; and Aboriginal perspectives in course content and assessment. These are more effectively provided in courses which are specifically designed for Aboriginal students. Such courses provide students with more effective networks and support systems and culturally appropriate ways of learning. Where these were provided, students felt affirmed and participation in VET was higher and more successful.

- The institution provides an Aboriginal unit and support services, and a defined cultural space, a centre, for students and staff.

Related to the recognition of the student's Aboriginality, were a range of other significant factors which acknowledged the difficulties that students experience within institutions not designed with their needs in mind. Students require the assistance of Aboriginal staff and support systems to negotiate complex and alienating institutional procedures and to get assistance with personal difficulties experienced as they try to meet competing personal and course demands. A culturally defined space was seen as important to affirm the student's culture and identity and to provide access to the support and networks. Where these were provided vocational education and training outcomes were more successful.

- The community is involved in course development and evaluation.

The involvement of indigenous Australian communities in the development and evaluation of courses was considered important in achieving culturally relevant and sensitive programs. Wide representation to mirror the diversity amongst indigenous Australians is needed to ensure that courses achieve this. The importance of culturally relevant courses to successful outcomes relates to the nature of education as a cultural process and to the specific requirements of significant numbers of students accessing VET to increase the skills required to work within, and support, their communities.

- The institution gives preference to the recruitment of Aboriginal staff, or non Aboriginal staff who have special personal qualities and understandings of Aboriginal cultures and histories.
- The institution organises induction and staff development activities for all staff who work with Aboriginal students.

The recruitment either of Aboriginal staff, or of non Aboriginal staff with special personal qualities, skills and appropriate cultural knowledge and understandings was identified as another key factor by providers. Staff with these special attributes are considered essential to achieving educational programs that are culturally sensitive. Allied to this is the need to provide induction and staff development for all staff working with Aboriginal students in order to ensure effective communication and understanding of the needs of students.

- The institution has flexible structures and course delivery systems which are responsive to the competing personal and course demands made on students.
- The institution defines clearer roles for staff providing courses and more autonomy for them to make decisions about Aboriginal programs.

Providers spoke of the difficulties they faced within institutions. They experienced frustration when inflexible institutional structures and lack of power did not allow them to change inappropriate course delivery systems to meet student and community demands. Their roles were not clear and they experienced conflict when complex demands placed on students and communities while participating in VET competed with those of institutions. To increase successful VET outcomes, providers stressed the need to make institutional structures and course requirements more flexible to take account of the demands placed on students. Providers also suggested that their roles within the institutions needed to be clarified and that they needed increased autonomy to make decisions regarding the improvement of course delivery systems to meet specific student needs.

- The institution develops course structures which are negotiated and checked with Aboriginal staff and communities for cultural appropriateness.

The difficulties associated with working within institutions raised another issue, that of negotiating the course structures and requirements. In order to ensure that institutions make culturally sensitive and appropriate decisions about structures and systems there is a need to check those decisions with Aboriginal staff and communities. Negotiating them would provide a most effective way of doing this and thereby increasing the effectiveness of delivery and outcomes.

The provider responses have identified a number of factors which contribute to, or mitigate against, successful vocational educational outcomes for indigenous Australian students. Successful outcomes are far more likely to be assured if these factors are taken into account by institutions in course design, support and delivery.

Language, literacy and learning

Language and literacy continues to be a significant issue influencing indigenous Australians' access and participation in VET. This significance is voiced by both learners and providers. While various concerns were expressed there is a common understanding that for most indigenous people, English language learning is a significant dimension of their learning and that therefore greater attention should be given to English language and literacy in relation to all aspects of education and training provision. This attention however also needs to acknowledge the cross-cultural dimensions of learning in VET.

The tensions around English language and literacy focus on the complex issues that arise in the negotiation of the cross-cultural relationships that emerge as indigenous people (with all their diversity in terms of life experiences in non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal communities), engage with institutional and non-Aboriginal learning arrangements.

The main tensions that emerged relate to:

- the range of English language and literacy learning goals of indigenous learners;
- the use of English language and literacy as part of entry criteria;
- the extent to which Aboriginal languages are acknowledged and are a part of the teaching and learning process;

- the amount and nature of English language and literacy support and the degree to which such support is integrated into the teaching and learning process;
- the nature of the assessment tasks used for entry purposes and used to measure learning gains;
- the extent to which Aboriginal ways of learning are accommodated without compromising mainstream 'standards'.

Effective course delivery in VET

The report urges government, institutions and practitioners to understand the factors affecting outcomes of participation in social and cultural terms. The main conclusion of the report is that *indigenous Australian's participation in education and training has to be approached as a cultural and cross-cultural activity.*

The report argues that research, policy and practice in VET have much to gain from this approach, for several reasons.

- Aboriginal education and training policy rightly gives central place to cultural issues and issues of the Aboriginal control of decision-making. Research should examine how culture and identity is affirmed through participation, and how participation can be self-determining.
- Research has not so far helped practitioners to understand vocational education and training as a social and cultural activity. By doing so, it can generate information that is useful in resolving problems faced by VET practitioners, including Aboriginal teachers and administrators, in implementing policy and improving course delivery.
- Research needs to listen to and amplify the messages of indigenous Australians who are experiencing VET 'on the ground'. The factors affecting participation can be understood from the perspectives of participants.
- There is increasing evidence that the main 'difficulties' usually attributed to Aboriginal education by non-Aboriginal people are due to their lack of understanding of what 'cultural difference' really means in education and training. This leads to a lack of understanding of the institutional and administrative issues that need to be resolved to provide effective cross-cultural course delivery.

The research concludes that improvements in course delivery, and hence outcomes, must be built upon a number of guiding principles for improved VET course delivery to indigenous Australians. These principles are summarised below in the Recommendations.

In setting out these principles, the report stresses the *complexity* of the delivery of programs within institutions as they interface with Aboriginal communities, government and other influences. 'Provision' of courses is not a simple one-dimensional process but a complex a set of arrangements for access, entry, course design, teaching and learning, assessment, support and staffing.

Therefore, the task of improving models of delivery has to recognise that 'cultural appropriateness' has to be achieved in different parts of the system. Culturally appropriate arrangements are arrived at through negotiation with Aboriginal communities, and by definition, are not imposed arrangements.

Positive outcomes of participation in VET for indigenous Australians can be maximised by attending to cultural appropriateness in each aspect of the complex processes of program delivery. They are achieved *not only* by setting up culturally appropriate models of delivery that are suited to the social, economic and educational needs of communities but *also* by the way such models are implemented and adapted through negotiation with indigenous people about the nature of effective practices at each point in those processes.

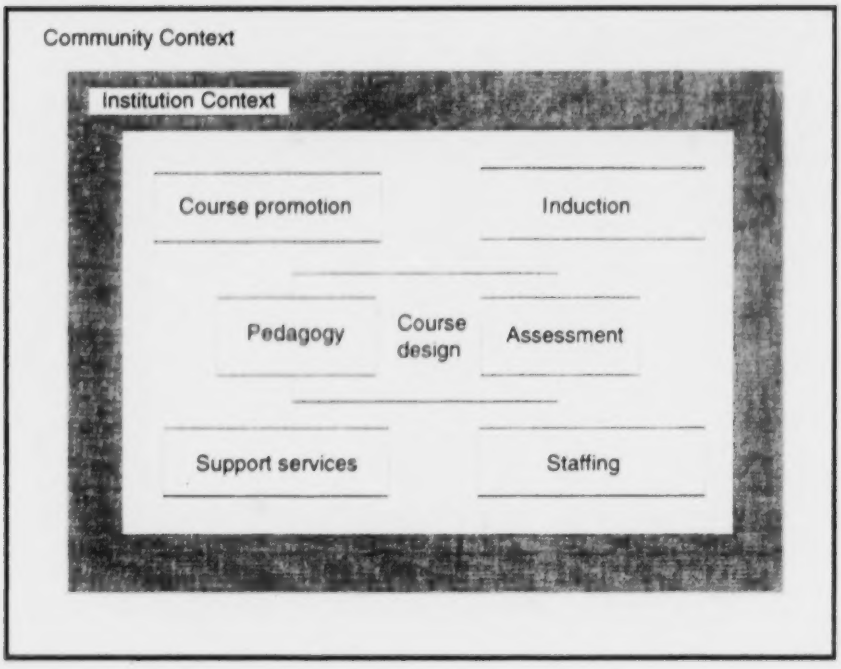
The two dimensions of effective provision have to be managed together, and one cannot substitute for the other. The focus of good practice has to be on *both* the cultural appropriateness of the program at each step of the process (which may vary according to context) *and* on the effectiveness with which program delivery is managed at each step. By 'steps in the process' is meant each part of the system of course delivery, including course promotion, induction and entry, course design, teaching, learning and assessment, and staffing and support services.

Thus the research rejects the conclusion that the way to improve outcomes for provision for Aboriginal people is by prescribing one or more ideal models of delivery which appear to serve Aboriginal people well. Rather, practitioners should focus on the range of factors that make up the 'effectiveness' of any one mode, while ensuring that cultural appropriateness is built into each aspect of their delivery.

The relationships among factors affecting outcomes are complex, but not so complex that they cannot be described. The project has resulted in an understanding that the complex nature of provision needs to be seen first and broadly in terms of the relationships of the course, the institution and the Aboriginal communities to which it relates - the *community context* of provision. Within these institution-community relationships, and affecting it in important ways, are factors in the *context of course delivery* including the delivery mode and teaching and learning and arrangements. The factors here, and their relationships to each other, can also be described. It is helpful to see these factors as comprising a complex system of delivery, in a holistic way, where the parts affect each other and the effectiveness of the whole program.

Figure 7.1 represents these relationships in a schematic way . The 'course delivery system' is seen as embedded in and interacting with the institution and the community, represented by dotted lines.

Figure 7.1
The course delivery system and its context



Recommendations

To ANTA and state VET authorities, regarding the improvement of delivery of vocational education and training for Indigenous Australians, it is recommended -

1. That VET providers be encouraged to adopt the concept of *course delivery as a cross-cultural activity* as a rationale for planning, developing and evaluating programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

   and

   that the following guiding principles be taken into account in implementing a cross-cultural approach to vocational education and training for indigenous Australians:

   (a) Recognise that vocational education and training is a cultural activity.

   Successful 'participation' for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples involves learning the 'academic culture' of institutions which may be in conflict with indigenous cultural meanings. Different cultural pathways bring indigenous Australians into VET and they place different cultural meanings on their experience of mainstream education and training.

   (b) Make a space for Aboriginality within the institution.

   The basic condition for achieving success in VET is the recognition of Aboriginal culture and identity at every stage of the educational experience.

This refers not only to physical accommodation such as Koori centres and to support services but preference in recruitment for indigenous Australians as teachers and managers, adaptations in course design, modes of delivery and teaching and learning practices that accommodate and affirm indigenous cultures and identity. Ways in which 'cultural space' can be made include Aboriginal people being able to learn together in a 'cultural vehicle' such as residential block release.

(c) Involve Aboriginal communities in course design and delivery.

Community involvement of Aboriginal people and organisations in designing course delivery is an important factor assisting positive outcomes. Family and community support is important to learners. Where indigenous Australians choose to learn non-Aboriginal knowledge and skills, content can be framed in terms of Aboriginal perspectives and bring in knowledge and experience from communities, and be taught in relation to the experience of students by Aboriginal teaching staff, or non-Aboriginal staff who are effective cross-cultural communicators.

(d) Negotiate culturally appropriate teaching-learning processes.

Greater flexibility is necessary in order to achieve course delivery that is culturally appropriate. Teaching and learning can be made so by negotiating appropriate practices with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. There can be a process of two-way accommodation: by students to the requirements of the institution and vice versa, by the institution to the needs of students. Students should be able to negotiate assessment requirements when commitments to family, community and work commitments create personal difficulties.

(e) Recognise that staffing and support issues are crucial to culturally appropriate delivery.

The employment of Aboriginal administrators, teachers, tutors and support staff is widely regarded by indigenous learners and institutions as a vital component in effective course delivery. Using Aboriginal staff to teach courses or having non-Aboriginal staff who are selected for their ability to teach in cross-cultural situations is essential. A range of support strategies should be integrated into course delivery systems, as well as provided through Aboriginal support units.

(f) Make relevant language and literacy learning integral to course delivery.

English language and literacy is a high priority for learners and institutions. English language is essentially the mode of instruction and no matter what the focus of the course is, learning involves learning about language and learning through language. Gains in language and literacy are a vital factor in further and successful participation in VET. This refers not only to the large number of students involved in preparatory or general courses, but in vocational

courses where continuing improving of academic skills is a goal that students are seeking along with other skills and knowledge. (Further recommendations on language and literacy follow.)

(g) Evaluate the effectiveness of each part of the system of course delivery.

More attention needs to be paid to questions of quality. The processes of delivery refer not only to the course design, teaching and learning and assessment, but to effective management of course promotion, entry and induction, staffing and professional development and support services. Effectiveness depends on the evaluation of each aspect of the 'system' of delivery, and acting on evaluation to ensure necessary changes are made.

2. That when VET providers design courses to indigenous Australians, they recognise the complex 'systems' nature of course delivery, and the need to achieve cultural appropriateness *at each step of course delivery*. In particular, attention should be given to (a) negotiating appropriate procedures and (b) evaluating the effectiveness of procedures in each of the following aspects:

(a) *Course promotion*, recognising positive 'word of mouth' evaluation can increase community support for a course.

(b) *Induction* procedures, especially enrolment, which should anticipate the cultural difficulties of students.

(c) *Course design*, which should provide Aboriginal perspectives on non-Aboriginal content and use culturally relevant materials so that students are able to move between cultures, relating different knowledges and competencies to each other.

(d) *Teaching and learning*, where flexibility and cultural responsiveness is valued by learners, who say learning is more effective when it is negotiated, collaborative and experiential.

(e) *Assessment*, where learners and providers both recommend flexibility, choice and cultural relevance in how learning is assessed.

(f) *Support*, which should include a range of strategies including supportive teaching of academic skills, peer learning in groups and support services such as tutoring, personal counselling, study skills courses and support from family and community.

(g) *Staffing*, which should give preference to recruitment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teaching staff, or other staff selected for experience in working with indigenous Australians.

3. That VET providers give more attention to a range of language and literacy issues in course delivery, and in particular -

(a) In acknowledgment of the significance of English language and literacy there is a need for more explicit descriptions of -

- English language and literacy requirements for entry into a course.
- English language and literacy involved in the teaching and learning process in the course.
- The expected English language and literacy outcomes of a course.

(b) In acknowledgment of the need for teaching and learning processes to work with the learners' experiences and culture, while maintaining engagement with the learning of English language and literacy, there is a need for:

- Staff recruitment criteria to reflect the valuing of specific skills and experiences that address the complex cultural and language issues involved in the design and delivery of VET provision for indigenous learners.
- Professional development activities that focus on the cultural and language dimensions of all aspects of VET provision for indigenous learners.

(c) In order to support the development of high levels of English language and literacy competence, English language and literacy need to be integrated into all aspects of the teaching and learning process.

(d) Institutions need to put into place processes for the evaluation of course and pedagogical initiatives that have been established to assist in the development of English language and literacy.

(e) Providers should support the inclusion in VET teacher education programs of a focus on language, literacy and learning in VET.

4. That VET authorities and providers consult with appropriate indigenous Australian organisations regarding the development of professional development strategies, which might include:

(a) The development of competencies in managing cross-cultural training for VET managers.

(b) Identification of competencies for VET practitioners in the area of cross-cultural training, including competencies in the language and literacy domain, for those engaged in course delivery with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

(c) Appropriate curriculum development to better meet the needs of Australian indigenous communities, particularly where VET is delivered in the community.

(d) Employment of indigenous Australian educators to develop and implement cross-cultural training.

5. That, in consultation with relevant indigenous Australian organisations, mechanisms be put in place to ensure the ongoing evaluation of the different aspects of course delivery systems, particularly the effectiveness of

    - Preparatory courses in preparing learners for the next stage in their learning.
    - The range of support services provided within institutions, including Aboriginal Study Units, Study Skills Units, and the use of tutors for individual or small group work.

To the Research Advisory Council of ANTA, regarding the directions of future research on the participation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, it is recommended:

6. That future research give a high priority to research approaches that are consistent with principles of self-determination, including Aboriginal-controlled projects, collaborative research processes and community-based inquiry.

7. That future directions for research on the outcomes of participation of indigenous Australians include, subject to discussion with appropriate Aboriginal consultative committees:

    (a) Case studies of effective systems of delivery of courses to Aboriginal communities, examining in particular ways in which communities establish relationships with institutions and the issues they face in achieving cultural appropriate delivery and quality in course delivery.

    (b) Inquiry into the ways institutions can achieve closer collaboration with indigenous Australian communities.

    (c) The outcomes of participation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students attending VET courses that are not specifically designed for them.

    (d) Evaluation of the effectiveness of 'bridging' courses and employment programs.

    (e) In the area of language and literacy, examination of the use of Aboriginal languages in the classroom, and of the effectiveness of different kinds of language and literacy support.

    (f) Given that this project has focussed on issues of delivery 'within' institutions, investigation of the effectiveness of community-based provision of VET courses.

Chapter 1
The Focus of the Research

For at least twenty years, a stream of government policies has pressed Australian education and training institutions to respond to the educational needs of Australia's indigenous peoples. These efforts have undoubtedly led to increased access and participation and other desirable outcomes including the adoption of forms of delivery which acknowledge the culture and identity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

Reports and policy documents by Government and peak organisations have highlighted the need for better information about those factors which affect access, participation and success rates of indigenous Australians. Practitioners in universities, TAFE colleges and other bodies have expressed the need for a greater understanding of these factors, in order to overcome the alienation of their Aboriginal students which occurs due to institutional and systemic requirements and to improve the cultural relevance and quality of course delivery.

Yet only now are there the beginnings of an understanding of the processes involved in providing education and training that *both* affirms the culture of indigenous Australians and delivers to them the potential for quality outcomes. The advent of national training reform has further underlined the urgency to understand, in a more systematic and coherent way, what factors 'make a difference' to the outcomes of participation.

So the problem explored by the project and reported here is: *what factors affect the outcomes of participation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people? And what might be the implications for policy and practice of a more comprehensive understanding of those factors?*

This chapter is an introduction to the main research issues explored by the project. The chapter:

- defines the research focus;
- describes some issues which have shaped the approach;
- defines the concept of culture that underpins the project; and
- outlines a framework of factors affecting the outcomes of participation.

The research question

The research took the view that the question of the factors affecting outcomes of participation must be interpreted in social and cultural terms. The primary assumption of the research is that *the participation of indigenous Australians in education and training has to be understood as a cross-cultural activity.*

There are several reasons for interpreting the research question from this standpoint:

- Aboriginal education and training policy has given central place to cultural issues and issues of the Aboriginal control of decision-making. Chapter Two outlines some of these major themes of policy in recent years.

- Research so far has not made much contribution to understanding vocational education and training as a social and cultural activity. If VET had been examined from this perspective, there might be a better understanding of the problems and issues faced by practitioners, and particularly Aboriginal teachers and administrators, in implementing policy and improving course delivery. Research is needed which listens to and amplifies the messages of indigenous Australians who are experiencing VET 'on the ground'. Chapter Three outlines the research issues in adopting a more collaborative and interpretive research approach.

- The difficulties of indigenous people are said to have in VET may stem from a lack of understanding of what 'cultural difference' really means, combined with poor management of the processes of cross-cultural communication and learning. If so, it is important to speak frankly about such difficulties. It will then be possible to re-examine cross-cultural understandings of education and training and to generate practical suggestions for improving the operation of course delivery systems for indigenous Australians.

- The possible range of factors which affect outcomes meant that research needed to conceptualise the complexity of these processes of course delivery and to consider the effects of both 'cultural' and 'institutional' issues (discussed below). In doing so, it was possible to see at which points or steps in the process cultural factors came into play. The research therefore was aimed at taking a broad view and to spell out the many aspects that required consideration in order to improve participation for indigenous Australians.

Quality outcomes: cultural and institutional issues

In an important recent discussion of Aboriginal education, McDaniel (see McDaniel and Flowers, 1995) has criticised the emphasis on access and participation at the expense of educational quality. McDaniel argues that well-intentioned attempts to increase the numbers of indigenous people in tertiary institutions have often led to what he calls a 'quality-compromised educational experience', one that lowers expectations of the performance of Aboriginal compared to non-Aboriginal people and which accordingly produces less-qualified and less competent graduates. Though McDaniel states the argument applies mainly to university programs which have funding quotas for indigenous students, it could also be applied to vocational education and training in general.

The nub of McDaniel's argument is that Aboriginal people come to non-Aboriginal institutions to get non-Aboriginal skills and knowledge, not to get 'Aboriginal education', which he regards as a misnomer. Therefore, to deny students a quality experience of non-Aboriginal education is to doubly disadvantage them in competing in a non-Aboriginal context and in engaging in Aboriginal contexts as they interface with non-Aboriginal society.

McDaniel identifies a range of causes of 'deliverer compromise'. Some of these arise from emotional responses to working with Aboriginal people and some in broader institutional agendas including the need to secure target quotas of students. He points to the difficulties of cross-cultural teaching, where an attempt at understanding cultural difference can lead, he suggests, to a fundamental educational misunderstanding:

> ... at the level of the deliverer, the compromising of standards and expectations normally required of non-Aboriginal students may be due to the deliverer's fear of Aboriginal people, the power of a group of Aboriginal adults and the possibility of being confronted or questioned over the demand for a certain level of performance or the enforcement of course assessment policy. This fear may be due to a self-serving wish to avoid unpleasantness. Alternatively, compromise may be due to a sometimes cited and well-intentioned concern that to do so they impose non-Aboriginal cultural expectations on to Aboriginal people and thereby engage them in an assimilative process. It is true the expectations or performance indicators are non-Aboriginal, however, provided students are fully informed as to the course expectations and their rationale prior to enrolment, the enforcement of culturally non-Aboriginal expectations is purely on a voluntary basis. (McDaniel and Flowers,1995:232).

Other causes of quality-compromise are said to include the desire by non-Aboriginal staff to be thought generous and appreciated by Aboriginal people, an over-identification with the qualities attributed to indigenous cultures or the desire to avoid adding to students' personal difficulties by failing them. However McDaniel suggests that an important cause of compromised standards are the funding arrangements (notably in higher education) which press institutions to create and fill 'Aboriginal' places.

McDaniel's critique implies that research should pay more attention to questions of quality in cross-cultural education and training. It highlights that all issues in 'Aboriginal education' are not solely issues of cultural accommodation and concludes that many of the difficulties experienced by providers and staff are 'not primarily cultural in origin and largely unavoidable' but simply 'institutional and administrative issues' that need to be treated as such. The difficulties of Aboriginal education stem more from institutional agendas than from cultural difference (McDaniel and Flowers,1995:244).

This critique implies that institutions need to examine the nature of their response to the participation of indigenous Australians and ask if it reflects best practice. Research can help providers to think critically about what matters are the central cultural issues and what matters should be regarded as administrative and system issues.

The current research has attempted to explore both 'cultural issues' and matters of educational quality related to institutional factors. It has focused on four directions of inquiry:

- What are the main factors affecting outcomes, and how do institutions see these factors? What is range of models of delivery of VET, and to what extent do they vary according to urban, regional, rural and remote contexts?
- What are the main concerns and issues of students experiencing these modes of delivery, in areas such as access and entry requirements, course design, the cultural appropriateness of teaching and learning experiences, the adequacy of support and assistance, and assessment practices?

- What are typical VET pathways taken by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and what do these pathways indicate about gaps which exist between course outcomes at early stages of learning, and the competency requirements of later stages? What does this imply for the articulation of courses and what does it imply for the designers of VET courses for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, to teachers and to those providing tutorial?

- What are the main language and literacy issues in the delivery of VET and how may they be understood in relation to questions of access, course design and delivery, culturally inclusive curriculum and assessment practices and so on. In particular, what different communicative styles are found to be relevant to the learning process, and what recognition is there of the role of Aboriginal languages (including Creole and Aboriginal English) in learning? How might different discourses and communicative styles be valued positively?

These directions constituted a broad agenda for the research, and in the research process which developed, a unifying principle was the need to understand the complexity of factors affecting outcomes of participation and to acknowledge the diversity of contexts of delivery.

Another principle underlying the research has been that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have the legitimate right to determine the nature of their educational experiences and expected outcomes within VET programs. The project therefore emphasised the exploration of perspectives of participants rather than the documentation of types and modes of delivery. This was also a way to provide a focus for a very broad field of research.

A concept of culture and cultural diversity

The McDaniel and Flowers critique provides one way to state the research 'problem', but one that is capable of being misunderstood. The McDaniel critique is not saying that the 'cultural issues' should be put aside in the search for quality of educational experiences, but rather that both institutional and cultural issues need to be clarified and considered: the two go hand in hand.

In order to approach the 'cultural issues' , it was important for the researchers to recognise the complexities around the term 'culture'. A recent report by Cope et al (1995), concluded that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities perceive that education and training programs are failing to meet their expectations for vocational and employment outcomes. It makes the following comment:

> Often, the concept 'culture' is deployed by analysts, administrators and teachers as a way to explain this failure [of programs to meet indigenous people's expectations]. It is [said to be] the 'cultural difference' of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people that inhibits their access to mainstream education, training and employment. It is 'cultural factors' which mean that assessment and referral into adult literacy programs do not work in the way that they should.
>
> From the evidence supplied by the informants who participated in this project, **it is evident that 'culture' is used in these senses in order to shift responsibility for failure from institutional and systems practices onto people whose needs are**

demonstrably not being met. 'Culture' becomes a concept by means of which the 'victim' is blamed for inadequate service provision.

> Many of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander informants spoke of negative experiences of education, including the tests that they had perennially failed at school. This is not a problem of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander 'culture', but a disjunction of lifeworlds in which no serious possibility of negotiated relationship with the culture of the 'mainstream' has been possible. Tests were imposed. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people failed. When this has occurred, this is structural racism.
>
> (Cope, Kalantzis, McDaniel, McGinty, Nakata, Purdon, Solomon and Stanton, 1995; emphasis added)

Thus one underlying theme of the research is the extent to which the institutional arrangements do allow for a 'possibility of negotiated relationship' by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples with the mainstream culture of institutions, without compromising educational quality.

The negotiation of a relationship between Aboriginal and mainstream cultures has become a touchstone for the researchers' developing understanding of the project. It has informed the development of the research process, with its emphasis on the participation of indigenous researchers. It can be seen in the method used to report results and it was central to the thinking about the question of the 'best models' for program delivery.

The focus of the research is therefore the question of what adjustments systems and institutions are making to allow recognition of people's different life experiences and different lifeworlds. At the same time, the research is *also* about achieving quality in educational experiences for indigenous people.

Underpinning the approach to the 'cultural issues' was a guiding definition of culture. The definition from the report on *Cultural Understanding: Eighth Key Competency* is a useful one because it captures the complex and dynamic nature of culture:

> Culture is socially created forms of human interaction and cohesion. It arises through socialisation and learning; it is neither natural nor fixed. Culture entails multiple personal and social meanings, relationships, practices and values.
>
> There are no fixed boundaries to cultures and cultures are always changing. Any individual lives in and between many different cultures: the culture of the workplace; the culture of educational institutions; culture as ethnic background; culture as aspiration, interest or inclination. In this sense, all our cultures have multiple layers, each layer in a complex and dynamic relation to the other. (NLLIA,1994:14).

A related principle is the acknowledgment of the diversity of Aboriginal cultures or Aboriginality. It follows from this concept of culture that the word 'Aboriginality' encompasses a range of lifeworlds and cultural experiences related to the nature of people's childhood, community, education and work experiences.

Importantly in education we need to move away from a concept of 'culture' and 'Aboriginality' that defines Aboriginal and Western cultures and contexts as distinct, fixed and separate - needing to be reconciled and merged through pedagogy. Such a view is inadequate for a number of reasons. First both Aboriginal and Western contexts are culturally complex (see McDaniel and Flowers, 1995:232-3, 236-7). Second, it does not

readily allow for the full exploration of differences and heterogeneity within Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal societies and systems.

The recognition of complexity and multiplicity is key to the exploration of innovative ways for:

- Aboriginal people to take control of their own destinies and to forge new relationships with non-Aboriginal societies and systems; and
- educational institutions to develop systems as well as pedagogical relationships that work with Aboriginal learners.

Factors affecting outcomes: a framework

The focus of the research on the accommodation of institutions to Aboriginal people's expectations and culture and the emphasis on negotiating relationships means that it is necessary to have a clear idea of the range of areas where this needs to be considered in course delivery. There is a need for a conceptual framework that sets out the range of issues in the research.

This section outlines five groups of issues or concerns in program delivery. These five sets of issues were the basis for framing the research interviews described in Chapter Three and they have also informed the discussion of 'models' of delivery throughout the report and provided a concept of the different components of a system of delivery (Chapter Seven).

The following list of issues was intended to be comprehensive, not in order to set up questions to which the research was to provide 'answers' in every case, but in order that the terrain of inquiry should be clear to the research team and participants and readers of the report.

Area 1: Access and Entry.

The first set of factors affecting outcomes refers to the nature of provision itself - the kind of programs to which students gain access, its links to Aboriginal community, its accessibility, the kind of entry criteria applied and the nature of language and literacy pre-requisites.

The nature of VET provision	How broad is provision, and how appropriate and relevant to the vocational and personal needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students?
	What is the extent of community involvement in deciding on the kinds of courses provided?
	How aware are students of course choices and the relationship of one course to another?
	How aware are students of community involvement in the nature of the provision?

Entry criteria	How explicit are the criteria for entry and in what ways are potential students informed about these? How aware are students of entry criteria?
Accessibility of provision	Where are VET courses located, and in what modes are they delivered? Is the range of delivery modes available to match desired attendance patterns? What is the nature and availability of support services such as child care? How aware are students of delivery mode choices and of support services? Does the pressure for maximising student numbers influence student access?
Language and literacy prerequisites	To what extent is English language and literacy competence a prerequisite for course entry, and does this competence take into account - assessment of previous life, cultural, educational, work and language experiences? use of specific language and literacy assessment tasks typical of the course? availability of preparatory courses for those with inadequate competence? How aware are students of the expected level of English language and literacy and of preparatory courses available? What factors limit students' access to courses including 'inadequate' English language and literacy skills, or provider expectation that a particular set of cultural and language knowledge and skills are prerequisites?

Area 2: Enrolment and induction.

A second set of factors affecting outcomes refers to enrolment and induction procedures - the learner's entry and orientation to the institution, the institution's systems for ascertaining and recording relevant information about students and the extent to which the Aboriginal community is involved in the process of assisting the induction of students into the institution.

Information	What kind of information is gained at enrolment regarding student goals, community expectations and support and student experiences, knowledge and skills? Are there mechanisms in place for such information to inform the design and delivery of courses?
Involvement	How are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people involved in enrolment processes and how culturally appropriate are enrolment procedures?
Selection tasks	How relevant are the reading and writing assessment tasks to the socio-cultural experiences of the students and how relevant are the language and literacy demands of the assessment tasks?

Area 3: Course Design

A third set of factors affecting outcomes is found in the design of the course. There is potentially a large number of such factors depending on whether the course is specifically designed for indigenous people, or whether the student is participating as an individual in a course not so designed.

The assumptions of current models of VET	How are courses designed specifically for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students similar to or different from those designed for non-Aboriginal students?
	What is the relationship of the course to other courses within the institution or those in other VET providers?
Stakeholders and their expectations	Who is involved in designing courses for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students (eg Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal staff, community members, students)?
	What are the expectations of stakeholders such as government, the institution, the staff, funding bodies, employers, community and individual students?
Tensions and conflicts	What tensions and conflicting ideas have a bearing on course design, and how are these accommodated? Particularly:
	education for 'community' versus education for the 'individual'
	institutional or funding body pressure to design competency based programs
	whether learning is for specific employment goals (training) versus more general education.
Goals and needs	To what degree does the course reflect various community goals and various student goals - both vocationally specific (eg. to develop competence in a specific vocational skill) and generic goals (eg. the desire to learn to read and write English)?
	To what degree does the course reflect differing pedagogical needs of students, including a desire to learn in one way rather than another?
	To what degree does the course reflect students' unfamiliarity with academic system, procedures and 'genres'?
Integration	Does the course bring together different components, such as bridging or preparatory work and specific vocational training?
	In particular, is there a specific focus on English language and literacy?
Flexibility	To what degree is there flexibility to cater for needs and issues that arise including attendance problems due to unpredictable yet common community, family and personal demands and pressures?

Adaptation of assessment	How do student knowledge and language resources help to shape the design of assessments tasks, for example group versus individual tasks, spoken versus oral presentations?
Support	Are student support systems part of the course design, and in particular, is tutorial support arranged by the institution?

The research narrowed its focus to those programs specifically designed for indigenous Australian students because of the practical difficulties in identifying and exploring the experiences of individual students in 'mainstream' courses (though the interviews reported in a later chapter did include examples of these course experiences).

In regard to courses those which were not designed specifically for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students yet attended by them, there are questions of the understandings which course designers have of their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander client group needs and interests and the degree to which these understandings are incorporated in the design of the course. There are also questions about the ways Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student needs and interests are identified, and whether or not there should be a separate policy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies.

Area 4: Course Delivery

A fourth set of factors refers to course delivery. These refer particularly to the way teaching and learning (pedagogy) is organised and the extent to which appropriate staff are recruited to ensure that teaching and learning relationships accommodate the needs and characteristics of groups of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Pedagogical practices can be explored to discover the extent to which they are negotiated while clearly stating course objectives, expected standards and assessment criteria.

Suitability of staff	What is the cultural background and experiences of teachers, tutors and support staff?
	What professional development for non-Aboriginal staff is provide for example, in cross-cultural awareness?
Staff recruitment	To what extent are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people recruited to co-ordinate, teach or support the course?
	To what extent is the institution successful in retaining such staff?
Pedagogy	What is the range of pedagogical strategies used and in particular, how are Aboriginal languages and non-standard English used in the teaching/ learning processes?
Language and literacy support	What kind of support for English language and literacy required for learning is there? Who provides it and in what ways and when?

Accommodation	What kind of practices address common issues that may arise with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, for example absenteeism; competing and conflicting demands on students; late or non-submission of work; racist attitudes of other students, notions of participation as competitiveness and so on?
Negotiation	In what way are course objectives and outcomes negotiated, yet clearly defined and how is their relationship to other courses defined?
	What degree of flexibility is there in deciding whether assessments tasks are group or individual, how much negotiation is possible and how clearly is their purpose and criteria defined for students?
Recording	To what extent are learner profiles used as an accumulative document of student performance?

Area 5: Outcomes and assessment.

A final set of factors refers to the assessment and recording of outcomes of courses, and the relationship of outcomes to the needs and expectations of stakeholders including the student's community, employers and their own vocational needs.

Appropriateness	Are learning outcomes assessed in culturally and linguistically appropriate ways?
	How are learning outcomes recorded and reported for the different stakeholders, including learners, other staff, funding bodies?
Explicitness	To what degree are outcomes expressed in ways that indicate a relationship to and/or a readiness for other courses?
	How explicitly is detail recorded, for example, regarding language and literacy outcomes?
Match to goals and needs	To what degree do learning outcomes match the requirements of related (including articulated) courses?
	To what degree do they meet the requirements of employment or a particular employer (the relevance and appropriateness of the course to specific vocation)?
	To what degree do outcomes meet the expectations of the community and the individual?
	What problems arise within the community for the individual such as alienation with peers?

Definition of terms

In this report there are a number of key terms that are used.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people or *indigenous Australians* is used throughout the report to refer to Australian indigenous peoples. In some contexts, for reasons of brevity or variety, the term Aboriginal is used, for example, in speaking of Aboriginal programs or non-Aboriginal people. Use of the acronym ATSI has been avoided.

The term *independent provider* refers to Aboriginal-owned and controlled educational organisations such as the Institute of Aboriginal Development (Alice Springs), Tranby Aboriginal Co-operative (Sydney) and The Aboriginal Community College (Adelaide).

Vocational Education and Training (VET) is defined broadly as the range of providers of post-compulsory education and training including higher education, TAFE, adult community education and labour market program providers and private providers (Employment and Skills Formation Council, 1993).

A glossary of common acronyms can be found at the front of the report.

Overview of the report

The report is organised in seven chapters.

- Chapter One provides an overview of the research.
- Chapter Two discusses the context of the research, reviewing the literature and examining the policy context of Aboriginal participation in education and training.
- Chapter Three describes the research process, outlining its rationale and method and giving details of the development of the learner and institution interviews.
- Chapter Four is an analysis of the perspectives of the learners based on the learner interviews.
- Chapter Five presents the findings from the institution interviews.
- Chapter Six examines language and literacy issues, bringing together material from both sets of interviews.
- Chapter Seven reviews the research findings and draws out implications of the research for the improvement of models of delivery of programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in VET.

A Summary Report with Recommendations appears at the front of the report.

Chapter 2
The Context of Participation

The previous chapter discussed the focus of the research. The aim of this section is to provide information about the context of the report, by reviewing the policy context of Aboriginal education and summarising some aspects of the participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in education and training.

This chapter provides further information about the context of the research project by:

- reviewing some of the major themes in Aboriginal employment, education and training policy and setting the background for the research;
- summarising some features of the participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in postcompulsory education and training;
- outlining a demographic perspective on the qualifications and participation of indigenous peoples in Australia.

The policy context of Aboriginal education and training

Over the years government policies on employment education and training and related areas for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have highlighted a number of themes. More recently these themes have been amplified or muted by training reform as governments have sought to reshape the vocational education and training system, and they can be traced in the analysis of policy issues in the following section. Four themes are explored.

- The theme of *disadvantage*. There is a need to increase the participation of Aboriginal people in education and training, to acknowledge the systematic discrimination of the past, provide access to vocational skills, equalise employment opportunities and build communities.
- The theme of *community consultation*. Institutions should, in providing access to Aboriginal people, acknowledge Aboriginal culture and identity, and consult with Aboriginal communities about their education and training needs and respond with appropriate courses. There is a recognition that Aboriginal people are mainly accessing basic and preparatory education, which needs to be linked to training for employment in communities.
- The theme of *self-determination*. Indigenous Australians should have control over Aboriginal educational decision-making. Government needs to rectify the lack of support for independent, Aboriginal organisations and lack of control of resources for indigenous education and address the criticism that publicly funded VET

providers are more driven by government agendas than the education and training needs of indigenous people.

- The theme of *training reform*. The impact of reform may be to increase the difficulties of indigenous Australians, unless steps are taken to develop appropriate indigenous curricula, create pathways from basic to higher levels of qualification and employment, provide forms of delivery that take into account the circumstances and cultural experiences of Aboriginal people and link training to employment outcomes for communities and individuals.

- The theme of *diversity*. Indigenous Australians and Aboriginal communities have a wide range of education and training needs which should be responded to in different and ways appropriate to the location of the community and its needs, the nature of the labour market, the educational levels and pathways of participants and their life, family and work circumstances, and in ways that are negotiated with the participants and communities.

These themes set the background for the current project for both the researchers and the participants. They underlie the issues being canvassed by the research and are reflected in the opinions of the participants. The following section therefore reviews the policy context in order to inform the rationale for the research described in Chapter Three and the findings reported in the remaining chapters.

The policy context

Among the most important reports on vocational education and training for Aboriginal people was that of the Committee of Review of Aboriginal Employment and Training Programs, the Miller Report (1985). The influence of the Report is difficult to measure and mentions of the report in relation to Aboriginal education policy seem to have been few.

General literature on Aboriginal vocational education, employment and training in the late 1970s concentrated on determining general skill areas; necessary support mechanisms to enable entry to training; definitions of target groups; and employment preparation.

In the early 1980s the focus in vocational education and training shifted to specific skill areas. Courses and training programs were provided in a very narrow band of occupations and career development has been linked to work skilling. Access to tertiary studies in higher education institutions received attention. The development of pathways from technical and further education to university studies has been an emerging consideration in policy, curriculum development and course structures.

An idea of the kind of occupational areas in which vocational skill development was considered a priority can be drawn from a number of sources. A list of such areas includes: basic nutrition, literacy, life studies, bookkeeping, shearing, saddlery, artefact making, pottery, clerical, trades assistant, plumbing, welding, building maintenance, carpentry and joinery, personal grooming, pre-apprenticeship, motor repairs, driver training, butchery and catering (Schwenke,1984; Loveday,1984; WA Division of Technical Education,1983, 1985; Dept. of Technical and Further Education, SA.,1986; Mountney,1987).

A review of Aboriginal Education policy by Hughes examined the national participation rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in 1986 and drew attention to decreasing involvement in education from age 20 (information on participation is discussed more fully in a later section of this chapter). At age 16, some 5% Aboriginal people were participating in education (compared to 20% of all Australians). Of 18-20 year olds, 4% were participating, and among 20 - 24 year olds, the figure is 2.6% (compared to 5.7%). For those over 25, the figure is 1.6%, compared to 5.7% for all Australians (Hughes,1988:32).

The report made recommendations to improve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in TAFE. These included the adoption of a participation target for Aboriginal people in TAFE of at least 4 per cent by the year 2000, from 1.4 per cent in 1986, the provision of special course funding to provide bridging and orientation courses, and student support measures including child care; the provision of capital funding for grants to enable an extension of TAFE annexes in rural and remote areas for the provision of Aboriginal education programs.

The Hughes Report also recommended institutions be encouraged to develop off-campus and external study programs to increase participation in TAFE by Aborigines in rural and remote communities, and support for other ways to increase the responsiveness of TAFE to Aboriginal community needs for on-site courses and training programs, and to encourage TAFE to develop accredited courses to serve the particular needs of Aboriginal communities and enterprises.

Most importantly, it sought the development of guidelines by TAFE authorities to establish the responsiblility of each institution to ensure that its courses in technical and further education acknowledge the validity of Aboriginal culture, and present Aboriginal communities and cultures in a positive manner in all teaching and research activities (Hughes,1988:31-32).

Lung claimed Aboriginal students in Years 10 to 12 aspired to skilled and semi-skilled careers (Lung, 1986). Loveday and Young's research indicated that one quarter of Aboriginal employees in TAFE were identified as teachers, which included literacy workers and librarians. This percentage referred to 71 people out of 286 individuals surveyed (Loveday,1984:101). There was a recommendation that TAFE design Associate Diploma and Diploma courses for 'Aboriginal employees in public service and administrative positions' to assist indigenous workers who were employed in positions servicing Aboriginal people (Castle,1985:46).

By the close of the 1980s there was an increased awareness of the need for evaluating successful outcomes, and an expansion of the horizons for training. Aboriginal health training programs, for example, emerged with greater emphasis on the provision of appropriate teaching staff and curriculum development. Equal Employment Opportunity and Affirmative Action legislation were also influencing employment and training strategies (SA Dept. of Technical and Further Education,1986; Lung, 1986,1987; Bins,1989).

In the present decade the possibilities for indigenous participation in vocational education and training have broadened through the integration of training programs to Aboriginal-defined needs, both current and future. The changing role of Technical and Further

Education in meeting Aboriginal community development, management and self-determination has opened up pathways previously under-developed in indigenous vocational education and training. Other factors which have received attention include assessing industry needs in Aboriginal controlled areas of employment, and the influence of rural and urban environments of the participants in course delivery, curriculum development, and the appropriateness of institutional settings for learning (Ensor,1989, 1990; Byrnes,1992; Murrumbidgee College of Agriculture,1992).

The 1994 review of literature relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education (Bin-Sallik, Blomeley, Flowers and Hughes, 1994) points out that Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal critiques of the appropriateness of vocational education and training between TAFE and community adult education providers come down on the side of Aboriginal controlled community education providers. This is due to the authors highlighting that the TAFE agenda is more clearly driven by government concerns than by the interests of the indigenous population.

The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy (NATSIEP) pointed out that indigenous Australians have continually called for greater indigenous 'influence in educational decision-making' (NATSIEP, 9). As Bin-Sallik and other authors have argued the call has been not for 'greater influence', but 'supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to take control of educational decision making' (Bin-Sallik, 1994:12). They raise the issue of the difference between consultation and control in Aboriginal education and training which is contained in many reports. Government policy restricts the notion of self-determination to increased participation in educational decision making, and contracts the opportunities for Aboriginal control. The Institute for Aboriginal Development noted Aboriginal control of that institution is of 'fundamental importance' (Institute of Aboriginal Development,1988:4). In 1988 they repeated the recommendation of the Miller Report:

> Government should adopt a clear policy of establishing Aboriginal service organisations where Aboriginal communities indicate this is how they want such services provided. In making provision for them government should establish a funding formula based on the cost of delivery of the same services through bureaucracies (Miller,1985:389)

The responses to the Final Report of the National Review of Education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples continued the call for 'self determination in education putting the authority to make decisions into the hands of indigenous Australians and Torres Strait Islanders' (Bourke,1994).

Recommendation 20 of the Final Report addressed Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) calling for changes to the types and amounts of training available to indigenous people, curriculum materials, and allocation of growth funds (Yunupingu, 1994:28). The NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group in its response declared the recommendation did not address 'critical issues in vocational education and training' and asked: "What about private providers?" (NSW AECG,1994:7).

The private providers such as the Institute of Aboriginal Development and Tranby Aboriginal Co-operative College have had an ongoing struggle to survive financially. Tranby campaigned to address the funding imbalance of the College in comparison to state and

federally funded institutions. They have instituted a program of public sponsorship to try and alleviate the burden of fighting for declining funds from government. The Institute of Aboriginal Development called for Department of Education, Employment and Training (DEET) funds in 1988 and the need for appropriate levels of funding still continue. These providers are over-shadowed by the large bureaucracies such as TAFE.

The enormity of the struggle by independent providers of training to indigenous Australians for increased financial and institutional recognition of their courses is illustrated by Matt Davies' address on the National Vocational Education and Training System to the Fourth National Conference on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies.

The TAFE system is by far the largest provider of vocational education and training to indigenous people. There has also been a steady shift reported in the types of courses undertaken as TAFE has emphasised accredited, industry driven training. In NSW for example, this shift has seen the proportion of non-credit short courses taken by indigenous people decrease from 50% in 1987 to less than 30% in 1991, while vocational education courses at certificate level have increased to over 70% in the same period, (Davies,1993).

In dollar terms there was an allocation of $2 billion for recurrent and capital funding. There was an allocation of $140 million for growth funds by the Commonwealth. Eighty percent of the funds were to be distributed on a population share basis and the other twenty percent was a performance component. Thus Queensland was to receive a share of the growth funds based on population which amounted to $22 million through ANTA. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Queensland constituted 2.5% of the state's population at that time (Davies, 1993). The distribution of funds to TAFE when compared to the IAD's course costs of $821,113 (Effective Full-Time Student Unit Cost $9,500) for 77 Aboriginal students in 1988 shows the difficulties faced by independent providers to challenge such educational bureaucracies even though the successful outcomes in terms of empowerment and Aboriginal control of decision making may be more recognisable in the operation of the independent provider (IAD, 1988:3).

Aboriginal education strategy and training reform

In *Working Nation* the then Prime Minister, Paul Keating announced the Federal Government would introduce training and education reforms to broaden and deepen the national skills base and equip young people for work (1994:8). The reforms were to be achieved by 'accelerating' change in vocational education and training. The system was then to 'respond to industry concerns', offer people a number of different pathways to employment, through public and private training providers. As well the reforms were meant to give disadvantaged groups access to training. Ultimately the employment and training system was to '... concern itself with what individuals can do, rather than how long they have spent in the system' (Working Nation, 1994:11).

The National Review of Education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples highlighted the variety of Aboriginal education strategy responses to the training reform agenda, though more in the submissions made to the Review than in the report itself. The New South Wales AECG in its response to the Final Report of the National Review of

Education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples made numerous recommendations.

One significant recommendation was the establishment of a national clearinghouse for 'information and data on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education'. They specified the clearinghouse be 'independent from any government body, most especially from DEET.' In essence this is similar to the former TAFE Clearinghouse in the National Centre for Vocational Education and Research. However, the proposal by the AECG was for a clearinghouse focused on indigenous education and placed within the Australian Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, Canberra (NSW AECG,1994:2).

The AECG Inc. also recommended the MCEETYA Taskforce take up a number of critical issues in vocational education and training, which they believed the Final Report had not adequately addressed. Determination of allocation of funds was one such concern (AECG, 1994:5).

The Report by Tranby Aboriginal Cooperative College to the Australian Committee on Training Curriculum (ACTRAC) in November, 1994 emphasised the need for self-determination as a foundation in vocational education and training for indigenous people. The Report pointed out the '... overriding right of indigenous people, is the right of self determination-not just in education, but in all aspects of life' (Tranby,1994:7).

Tranby's report declared self-determination must begin with indigenous control over vocational education and training curriculum. It was further noted that school systems across Australia generally failed indigenous people and when Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people sought to 'improve their educational position' they turned to technical and further education institutions. However, in doing so students generally enrolled in what the Tranby Report called 'catch-up' courses. They noted that over 40% of indigenous Australians people were in basic education and pre-employment courses. Drawing on this and other evidence they strongly recommended an increase in the amount of specifically indigenous curriculum development through a number of national projects in order to provide pathways into higher levels of qualification and employment for those currently studying at the basic level (Tranby,1994:9).

Employment strategy was another area where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations have responded vigorously to the training reforms. The Review of Employment Strategies for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People (Rich,1994) stated that the first steps in employment programs were to develop and set strategies. Members from various organisations in the case studies stated they required freedom to develop appropriate strategies for the organisation, coupled with the need for constructive guidance from DEET. They highlighted the importance of consultation with stakeholders. Those who did consult a range of stakeholders found they were able 'to identify needs, interests and direction for activities associated with the strategy'. The organisations pointed to the need to set realistic objectives or targets. This was considered important for management of the program and implementation of the strategy. They recognised the need for vision and a plan to meet the strategy objectives. Some organisations also used feasibility studies and research to assess viability and to identify opportunities and constraints (Rich,1994:6-8).

Linda Burney, President of the Aboriginal Education Consultative Group Inc., in New South Wales expressed doubts about the ability of industry and employers to 'go out of their way to make sure that a percentage of their intake is Aboriginal' (Training Agenda, 1994:18). She noted that bodies such as ANTA (Australian National Training Authority) and BVET (Board of Vocational Education and Training) had to ensure that

> ... equity strategies are not just words on paper, but real, practical things that will assist Aboriginal people in accessing vocational training (Burney,1994:18).

Participation in TAFE

Despite nearly fifteen years of concern with the participation of disadvantaged groups in TAFE, it is only recently that national statistics began to include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students as a category in enrolment statistics (Foyster,1994). It has been difficult to gain a long term view of the participation of indigenous students in Technical and Further Education as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students were not identified by some states until 1993.

The concern over the collection of statistical data on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in vocational education and training has been recognised by the various parties engaged in the field. The Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) has proposed strategies for data collection and program development in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander vocational education and training. The participation rates and outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people will be monitored. Pilots will be undertaken to give indigenous communities a 'user-choice' when determining providers for programs (ANTA, 1994:21).

The first year for which reasonably adequate national data is available is 1993 (Foyster, 1994). In 1993 there were some 21,300 students identifying as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, or some 1.5% of the one and half million TAFE students in that year. This figure is felt to be an under-estimate for various reasons (Foyster, 1994:16). New South Wales and Queensland are the biggest providers of Technical and Further Education to indigenous students in Australia. The national data provides details on the age and sex of student, the types of courses done (stream and field of study) and the level of qualification studied for. A number of trends are apparent:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students were marginally younger that non-Aboriginal students, though when compared with the Aboriginal population as a whole, younger people were in fact somewhat under-represented in the TAFE population (Tranter et al,1994).
- As Table 2.1 shows, there is an age and gender difference. Among Aboriginal students, there were proportionally more younger males and proportionally more women in the 30 - 60 age groups. (There were proportionally more older non-Aboriginal students of both sexes due to this group having a lower birth rate and longer lifespan than indigenous Australians).

- Aboriginal students were concentrated in certain fields of study, compared to other students. Over half were enrolled in basic education courses - whereas only one fifth of all students were enrolled in this field of study. Some 18% were enrolled in Business and Administration, another 10% in Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences and another 9% in Engineering and surveying. There were some differences in between men and women in this participation pattern (Figure 2.1).

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students were also concentrated in certain streams of study. One half were enrolled in Stream 2000 or Educational preparation courses and a further quarter in initial vocational training (Stream 3100) , a total of 81% in these three groups. Very few Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students were enrolled in Stream 1000 (leisure and enrichment courses). When participation is analysed by annual student contact hours the picture is much the same.

- Compared to non-indigenous students, Aboriginal students were studying at lower levels of qualification - in 1993 50% were studying at Certificate level (32% for non-Aboriginal) and a further 45% below this level.

Clearly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are attending TAFE mainly in preparatory courses or lower level training. This suggests that the pathways in VET for many students will begin with or pass through, or, as the evidence presented later shows, sometimes lead to, a basic education or general education course of some kind. One question concerns the outcomes of these courses for Aboriginal students. What do they gain from such courses and where do they go once these courses are completed?

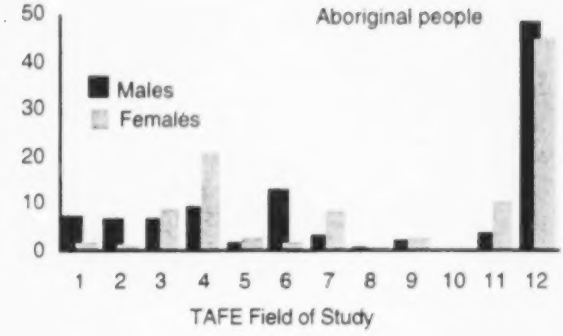
Other questions are raised by this data. To what extent does age and gender affect participation in different types of courses? What might this indicate about the completion rate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people?

Table 2.1
Participation in TAFE by age, sex and mode of study, 1993

		Age group								
		15-19	20-24	25-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	over 60	ns	Total
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students										
Male	FT	3.6	2.4	1.5	1.9	0.7	0.3	0.0	0.3	10.6
	PT	26.2	20.9	13.3	16.1	6.3	1.8	0.6	4.2	89.3
Female	FT	3.9	2.7	1.7	3.1	1.5	0.5	0.1	0.2	13.7
	PT	22.9	14.6	12.1	18.6	9.3	3.9	1.2	3.6	86.2
Other students										
Male	FT	4.6	2.3	0.7	0.8	0.3	0.1	0.0	0.1	9.0
	PT	23.7	18.9	11.1	19.2	10.7	3.5	0.9	3.0	91.0
Female	FT	5.7	2.9	0.9	1.4	0.7	0.1	0.0	0.1	12.0
	PT	22.5	16.3	10.2	19.2	12.7	3.6	1.1	2.4	88.0

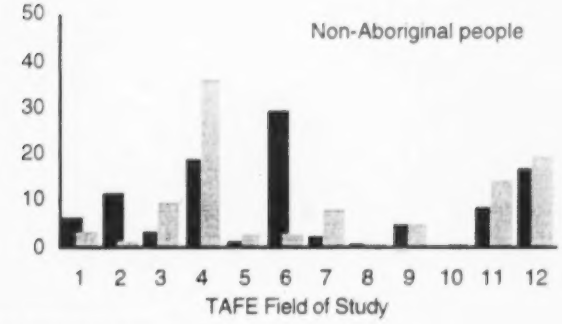
Figure 2.1
Participation in VET by field of study by sex of student,1993

Percentage of each sex who enrolled by field of study in 1993, stream 1000 excluded.



Key to fields of study

1 Land and marine resources
2 Architecture and building
3 Arts, humanities & soc science
4 Business & administration
5 Education
6 Engineering & surveying
7 Health & community services
8 Law and legal services
9 Science
10 Vet Science
11 Services, hospitality
12 TAFE multifield education



Source: NCVER (unpublished data, 1994 statistical collection)

The outcomes of participation in Aboriginal education and training

In 1988 the IAD (Institute for Aboriginal Development) gave details of its enrolments. The course ranged from General Literacy and Education through to Driver Education. The largest number of Aboriginal student full-time enrolments were in the General Literacy and General Education courses, while Home Management drew a large proportion of the full-time enrolments. Part-time enrolments were concentrated in Driver Education, Cross-Culture Workshops and Languages programs. General education and bridging courses concentrate on literacy which indicates the overall need for providers to ensure language and literacy competence for participants in vocational education areas. Assisting learners to work cross-culturally was the other major educational concentration in the IAD at that time.

In the same period the labour market position of indigenous Australians in non-metropolitan New South Wales was examined by the Social Welfare Research Centre at the University of NSW. The Report called for urgent policy discussions paying attention to:

- greater encouragement and support for Aboriginal organisations such as the Aboriginal Land Councils to set up viable co-operative ventures which enable their members to partially or completely withdraw from the formal labour market without being dependent on the public sector for income support;

- better access to and participation in higher levels of education with curriculum orientated towards labour market success and maintaining Aboriginal identity;
- better access to and participation in the acquisition of useful job-related skills other than through the education system;
- greater encouragement of the private sector to employ Aboriginal workers in employment other than low pay, low tenure jobs (Ross,1988:22).

The Report recorded a number of factors which affected Aboriginal unemployment, one being 'lack of education beyond basic education (Ross,1988:22), concluding that Aboriginal unemployment would remain at unacceptable levels until indigenous people are 'more economically independent'.

In order to be independent indigenous Australians will need to be equipped with those skills which enable them to take advantage of whatever job opportunities exist - be they either in paid employment, self employment, community ventures or co-operative ventures (Ross, 1988:23).

One important source of data on the outcomes of participation is the National Client Follow-Up Surveys conducted by the NCVER. The follow-up Survey of Vocational Education in 1993 showed 34.2 of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants had engaged in further study after undertaking their course in TAFE.

Table 2.2
Further studies since undertaking the course

Group	Yes	No, but will enrol in 1993	No, but will enrol in 1994	No
Female	40.5	5.8	8.7	42.4
Male	35.7	6.5	10.00	45.7
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	34.2	7.0	11.3	43.2
Non-English Speaking Background	43.1	9.9	8.0	36.5
Physical Disability	42.9	5.4	8.9	40.1
Learning Disability	44.7	9.0	6.6	35.7
Sole Supporting Parent	43.7	7.7	11.6	34.6
All	38.2	6.2	9.3	43.9

Source: NCVER National Client Follow-up Survey (Dawe, 1993:38).

The courses in which participants had enrolled was not examined. There was no indication of whether the respondents had engaged in courses in higher education institutions. Participants in the survey were also asked to indicate their employment status as at the 30 April 1993. One table indicated the number engaged in a 'first full-time job'.

Table 2.3
Percentage engaged in first full-time job

	Main job is first full-time job:	
Group	Yes	No
Female	27.7	47.3
Male	40.1	53.5
Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander	46.2	33.8
Non English Speaking Background	33.2	34.0
Physical Disability	23.4	34.1
Learning Disability	37.8	33.8
Sole Supporting Parent	16.8	34.9
ALL	33.9	49.7

Source: NCVER National Client Follow-up Survey (Dawe,1993:37).

The Report of the National Client follow-up survey provided some data on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment, though unfortunately they do not indicate the degree of permanency nor the particular area of employment as it relates to the vocational educational course undertaken by Aboriginal and indigenous participants.

The survey showed that the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students enrolled in Higher Education from 1989 to 1993 who had a complete or incomplete TAFE course prior to entry has shown a steady increase while the figures for Other Australian Students in the same band remained steady, (0.9% in 1989, 1.0% in 1990 to 1.1% in 1993).

The Coles Report on Educational and Vocational Training Needs of the Aboriginal Labour Market in Rural and Remote Areas of the Northern Territory pointed out that education and training are influenced by the labour market, and in turn, finding people with the necessary skills 'who are willing to do these jobs.' Coles goes further noting that there are not sufficient numbers of indigenous Australians in remote areas with the skills to carry out existing jobs. Aboriginal people in remote areas therefore need education and training so that 'the jobs can be done by local people, rather than by outsiders' (Coles,1994:56).

The skills required cover all vocational fields and, although there are currently people training in these areas, the rate of growth in the number of people acquiring these skills is such that the creation of a pool of skilled people just to meet current needs will be slow. Even without an expansion of the range of economic activities in remote areas, the age structure and increasing population indicate an increasing need for jobs in areas such as education and health (Coles,1994:56).

It was noted that some young indigenous employees have low expectations in terms of training and career development (Rich,1994:12). Expectations of successful outcomes by training institutions and funding bodies often differed from that of indigenous students. Training in one area, but finding employment in another was not usually classified as successful. Also trainees or students leaving a course incomplete to enter another form of training or to take up employment has been considered 'failure' in certain statistical

profiles. This limits the picture which can be drawn in terms of success in education and training. An indigenous person may have acquired the skills personally considered necessary to take up an area of study or employment which was previously considered unattainable. This is a successful outcome because the student or trainee is determining their path and often has been able to do so through gaining confidence and knowledge to make a choice.

Indigenous employees or trainees also have limitations placed upon them by the narrow expectations and views of training bodies and employers. An indigenous person in middle management explained how this situation can occur in attempting to advance in employment (Rich, 1994:16). Working in identified positions had not provided her with an opportunity to gain the competencies or work experience to enter a mainstream position either at a similar or more senior level. She felt that the skills she had developed were not always perceived to be relevant by other managers.

This suggests a need to link competencies of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people working in identified positions to 'core competencies' that are applicable organisation wide.

Higher education as a destination for Aboriginal students

In the same year the Miller Report was released, Senator Susan Ryan, the Federal Minister for Education, declared that increased participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in higher education would pave the way to self-management and land rights. The chairman of the then Commonwealth Tertiary Education Commission, H. Hudson, also called for 'educational equity, co-ordinated support and student peer support' (cited in Riley-Mundine, 1988). However, as Riley-Mundine commented, the detailing of concerns was not policy. 'And until such time that Aborigines are fully able to implement their policies with real control/power, they remain concerns only' (Riley-Mundine, 1988:165). The problem for indigenous Australians in identifying higher education as a destination was 'systemic bias and institutional racism', and the threat of losing or undermining indigenous identity (Riley-Mundine,1988:165; Harris,1988).

Table 2.4
Higher education enrolments 1989-1993

Year									
1989		1990		1991		1992		1993	
No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
51	1.5	79	2.2	92	1.9	118	2.3	148	2.7

Source: Yunupingu, (1994:106. Statistical Annex)

According to the Review of Education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in 1992 there were 13,672 indigenous Australians in TAFE compared to 418,051 non-Aboriginal students, though half of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student population were studying basic education and preparatory courses (as discussed above). However, between 1988 and 1993 the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in higher

education institutions doubled (Yunupingu, 1994:27, see Table 2.4). Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were, in 1992 figures, more likely to be enrolled in TAFE than higher education than other Australians. However, it cannot be doubted that increasing participation in TAFE has played an important role in bridging the gap in participation by indigenous Australians in higher education.

The majority of indigenous Australian students have been more likely to gain entry to higher education through special admissions programs. Some 34% of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student population were enrolled in Arts, Humanities or the Social Sciences and 30% in Education. There has been a move away from diploma and certificate course enrolments towards degree courses. The number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander graduates had also increased. There were 5,578 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people studying in Australian universities in 1993 compared to 527,468 other Australians.

The Report of the National Client Follow-up Survey conducted by Dawe and NCVER gave findings on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander graduates from vocational education and TAFE courses. These findings were drawn from 25,330 completed questionnaires which represented 76% of the 1992 graduates including 8% with courses incomplete, and 10% who had completed before 1992 (Dawe, 1993:17). The equity section of the survey showed 1.5% of the female respondents and 1.2% of the male respondents were of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent. The survey revealed the following statistical profile on further study by graduates, however, there is not indication of whether the study was to be undertaken in higher education institutions. The intention of the survey was 'to monitor client satisfaction with vocational education' (Dawe, 1993:5)

Table 2.5
Further studies undertaken by indigenous Australian students in TAFE

Group	Further studies since undertaking the course: Yes	No, but will enrol in 1993	No, but will enrol in 1994	No
Female	40.5	5.8	8.7	42.4
Male	35.7	6.5	10.0	45.7
Indigenous	34.2	7.0	11.3	43.2
All	38.2	6.2	9.3	43.9

Adapted from Dawe (1993, 38).

Interview based studies of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student are generally more enlightening on the pathways to higher education. The Port Augusta College of TAFE Aboriginal Study Centre program (Wright-Austin, 1993) indicates the background to student moving into further study.

> It is a fairly good set up to study in, and away from any distractions. I'd do another course, or finish the course I started, in the near future, as soon as work commitments settle down for me.

> I have completed the Community Administration course and got a Certificate last year and hopefully I can complete this course with the less hours that's been taken off.
>
> From my point of view, I think that the Study Centre here in Dunjiba is a good opportunity for adults and students to learn more and to be further educated.

The few indigenous Australians in administration and management who lack formal qualifications need access to degree courses in ways that accord with their work commitments. However, employers often consider that training has to be matched to industry needs and connected to training programs within organisations. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in middle management regarded their advancement being reliant on acquiring 'core competencies' that were applicable across an organisation, (Rich, 1994:16) which may deter such employees from moving outside their employment area and into higher education in order to acquire such competency.

Tranby Aboriginal Co-op College commenced the first tertiary preparation course in 1983 and by 1988 had 85 students in its various programs of study. Tranby graduates can be found spread across universities and TAFE in NSW and other states. Initiatives by independent providers and other bodies have slowly assisted in addressing the gross imbalance in Aboriginal participation in higher education and their role has been vital in bridging pathways to degree study.

Summary

As a conclusion to this review of the literature, Coles's analysis of education and training in the Northern Territory has relevance for national considerations of Aboriginal vocational education. The analysis presents the following range of issues for consideration (Coles, 1994:56-60):

1. the types of training available;
2. modes of delivery;
3. standards of training provided;
4. portability of skill;
5. standard and portability of qualifications;
6. education and training which meets individual and community/organisation needs;
7. education and training which meets general community (industry) needs;
8. accreditation based on criteria applied to non-indigenous programs to ensure portability and recognition of training;
9. the tole of non-accredited courses in Aboriginal education and training;
10. accredited training courses or programs in 'employment-related areas'
11. matching needs to individuals, communities, and employment;

12. balancing needs and skills;

13. relating non-Aboriginal culture to indigenous culture;

14. physical locality of participants;

15. community based training;

16. academic support for students;

17. language of instruction.

Aboriginal control of indigenous education as a means of achieving self-determination has been a theme expressed in literature emerging from Aboriginal institutions. Research outside such bodies has also emphasised indigenous control over delivery and curriculum development in Aboriginal education.

Aboriginal - controlled adult education has been shown to be effective. The most notable example, Tranby College, has for over two decades provided skills courses in response to the expressed needs of Aboriginal communities (Foley and Flowers,1990:150).

The necessity for vocational education programs which serve the needs of Aboriginal people, communities, and organisations and follow the directions set by indigenous self-determination are central concerns in future planning and policy development. Where Aboriginal controlled industry is established there is generally a call for appropriate education.

A demographic analysis of qualifications and participation

Another perspective on the participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in post-compulsory education and training is provided by a demographic analysis based on the 1991 Census. The previous section highlighted the lower levels of qualification and participation in education and training of indigenous Australians.

The research explored some of the differences in the educational qualifications and participation of indigenous Australians residing in different states, regions and localities. There are variations between rural and urban areas in the distribution of qualifications and in participation rates. This regional analysis is important in highlighting the diversity in indigenous communities and the importance of recognising the need for different models of delivery in diverse contexts.

The following analysis uses a number of indicators to make broad generalisations across states and regions and give some examples of the computer mapping of this Census data. A certain educational indicator such as the percentage of people who left school at 16 years of age or earlier, or who were attending TAFE in 1991 can be calculated for every local government area where there are indigenous people in significant numbers. More specific indicators might be the proportion of people holding a skilled vocational qualification or attending university full-time. This focus on education has to be seen in relation to the distribution of the indigenous population in Australia. Two educational indicators were used:

- For education qualifications, the proportion of people aged over 15 who in 1991 held a post-school qualification (including a vocational certificate, diploma or degree (the 'qualified'). The proportion of 'not qualified' people can be taken as an indicator of vocational education and training needs in the area.

- For participation, the proportion of people aged over 15 who said at the 1991 Census that they were attending a university, TAFE college or other institution (not secondary school). The proportion of people participating can be taken as a rough guide to the degree of access to education and training in the locality.

Allowing for the age of the data and its generality, the analysis supports a number of conclusions which are illustrated in the accompanying tables and figures:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as a proportion of the total population in a local government area or region is higher in rural and remote areas than in urban localities

- The proportion of qualified Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is generally lower in rural regions which have a larger indigenous population and a smaller non-Aboriginal population

- The highest levels of qualified indigenous people reside in urban areas and within urban areas in some localities with smallest proportions of indigenous people

This distribution of qualifications can be illustrated by maps at the level of Local Government Area within a state and within capital cities. The analysis presented here provides illustrations only and is indicative data which needs more detailed scrutiny.

The regional distribution of qualifications and participation

The largest population areas are often (but not always) less qualified and less likely to participate in post school education than indigenous Australians in urban areas. There are large numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in the larger cities where they form a smaller proportion of the total population than in rural areas. Table 2.6 highlights these differences by 'section of state'.

In 1991, the proportion of the Australian population which held a post-school qualification ranged from some 35% to 40% depending on the state. The figure for indigenous Australians is generally lower, but it is much lower if they live outside a major urban area and the urban/rural difference is much greater for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people than for non-Aboriginal people. For example, in NSW the difference is some 15% for major urban compared to 9% for rural balance, compared to the non-Aboriginal figure of 30% compared to 28% (or 25% for other urban areas).

The distribution of participation and qualifications can be mapped in a very broad way based on statistical sub-divisions in mainland Eastern Australia as shown in Figure 2.2. Queensland and New South Wales have the largest indigenous populations. The rural areas have larger proportions of indigenous people, and also the lowest levels of post-compulsory participation. Not shown on this map are the urban areas which have the

lowest proportions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people but generally higher levels of qualifications and participation.

Table 2.6
Qualifications and participation, 1991: rural and urban sections of state

	Post school qualification		Participation aged over 15*	
	ATSI %	All %	ATSI %	All %
NSW Major Urban	14.8	30.0	5.8	7.8
NSW Other Urban	9.9	25.4	4.6	5.3
NSW Rural Balance	8.6	28.1	4.1	5.1
Vic Major Urban	16.6	27.5	6.3	7.6
Vic Other Urban	9.7	24.2	4.3	4.4
Vic Rural Balance	14.4	27.1	3.9	4.4
Qld Major Urban	12.5	26.5	6.1	7.1
Qld Other Urban	7.5	23.8	2.8	3.8
Qld Rural Balance	7.2	23.4	2.3	3.5
SA Major Urban	11.8	26.7	8.7	7.3
SA Other Urban	9.5	22.8	5.2	4.1
SA Rural Balance	6.4	23.4	3.4	4.2
WA Major Urban	11.2	30.1	6.0	8.6
WA Other Urban	6.5	26.0	3.6	4.5
WA Rural Balance	3.2	25.2	1.4	3.9
Tas Major Urban	14.2	26.6	7.2	7.9
Tas Other Urban	12.0	22.2	5.5	5.4
Tas Rural Balance	14.3	24.4	3.2	3.8
NT Other Urban	7.2	30.7	3.4	6.5
NT Rural Balance	1.9	22.9	1.2	3.0

*Proportion aged over 15 attending a university, TAFE college or other tertiary institution.

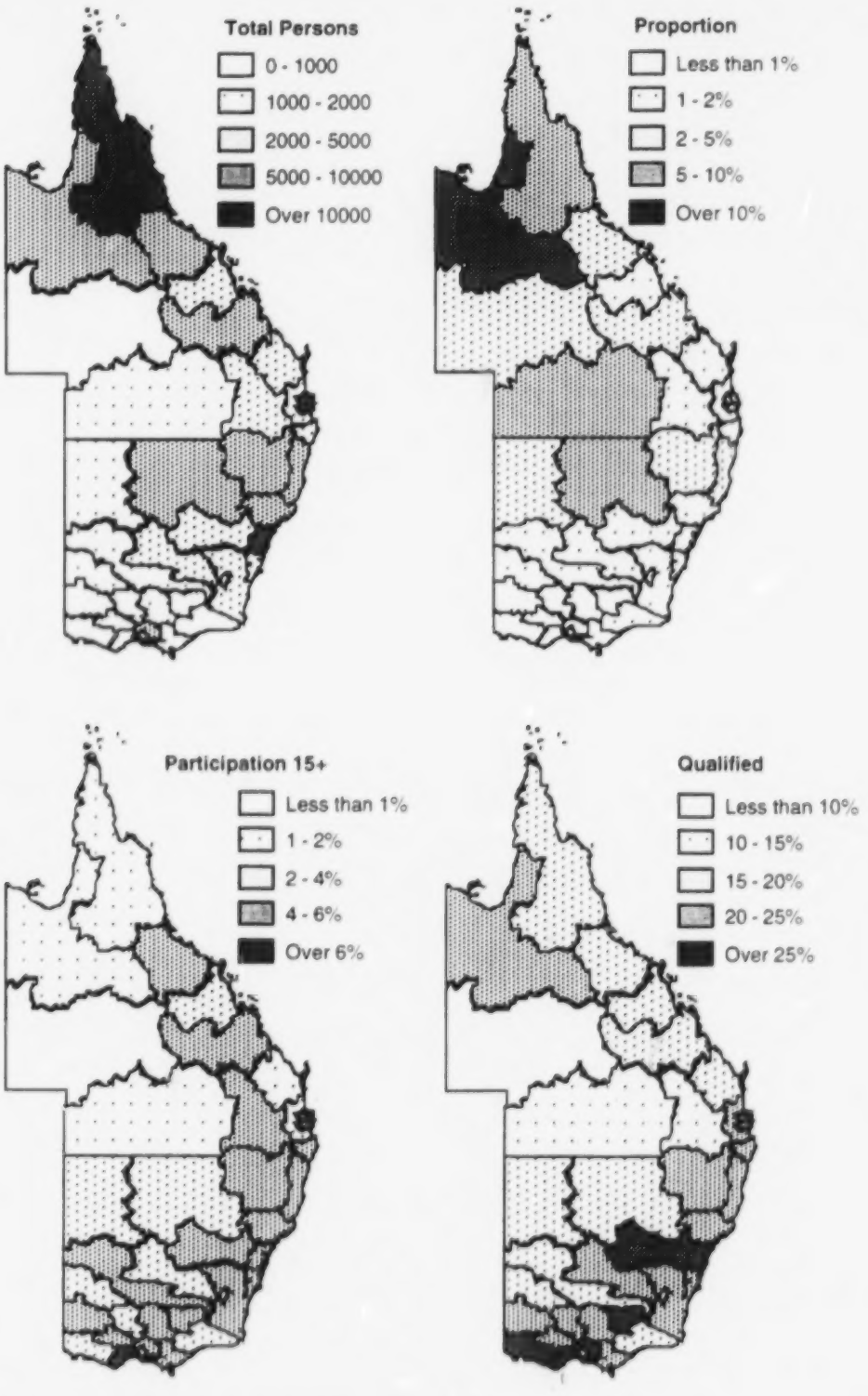
Source: ABS 1991 Census (CDATA91)

The map can be interpreted as implying the relative disadvantage of remote areas. It is possible that some rural areas with relatively higher participation and qualification levels, especially in the south east, are reflecting the degree of access to TAFE colleges, regional universities and other providers.

It is to be expected that there are relatively more qualified Aboriginal people in more urban centres because these offer the greatest job opportunities and greater access to further education and training for indigenous people.

Figures 2.3 and 2.4 provide more detailed maps of the qualifications and participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in 1991 in Queensland and New South Wales, and in Figure 2.5, an example of the analysis of the Sydney urban area.

Figure 2.2
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population and participation, 1991
Statistical subdivisions - Eastern Australia



Source: ABS, 1991 Census (CDATA 91 with Supermap)

The urban picture is different from the broad state and regional picture. Within the major capital cities, it seems that the local government areas with the largest Aboriginal populations also have lower levels of qualification and levels of participation. Figure 2.4 shows Sydney as an example of an urban area. It is mapped showing those LGAs which had significant numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The largest Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in Sydney are found in the inner city, west and south west. Blacktown had over 3000 indigenous people in 1991, Campbelltown over 2000 and Penrith over 1500 and South Sydney had about 1000.

The LGAs with the highest levels of qualification are found in the inner city and northern areas. Hornsby, Baulkham Hills and Manly and Warringah had over 20% of their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population holding some post-school qualification. These LGAs have smaller populations of indigenous people. The LGAs with the highest levels of participation of their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander residents were Camden, Sutherland, South Sydney and some inner city areas including Manly. The western Sydney LGAs of Campbelltown, Blacktown, Penrith, Fairfield and Liverpool had relatively low levels of participation.

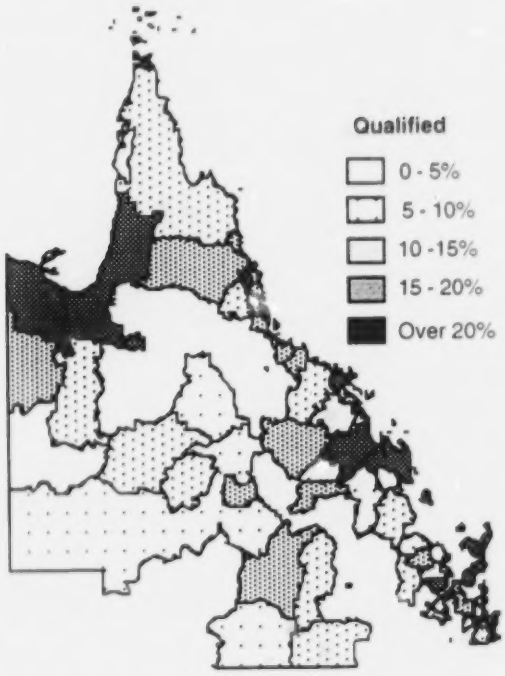
This distribution of qualifications and post-compulsory participation within an urban area indicates the importance of recognising inequalities of access and participation within a region and the diversity among Aboriginal communities within a large urban area.

Again, it needs to be said that there are limitations using these maps to illustrate some broad trends in the distribution of educational qualifications and levels of participation. They are graphic displays of some information rather than others and are 'snapshots' that refer to information collected at one time and place. It will be recommended that future research refine such mapping techniques to make more detailed analysis using more current data on participation and qualifications available through AVETMISS.

The information on which this mapping is based may be found in tables of indicators by Local Government Area in Appendix 1.

Figure 2.3

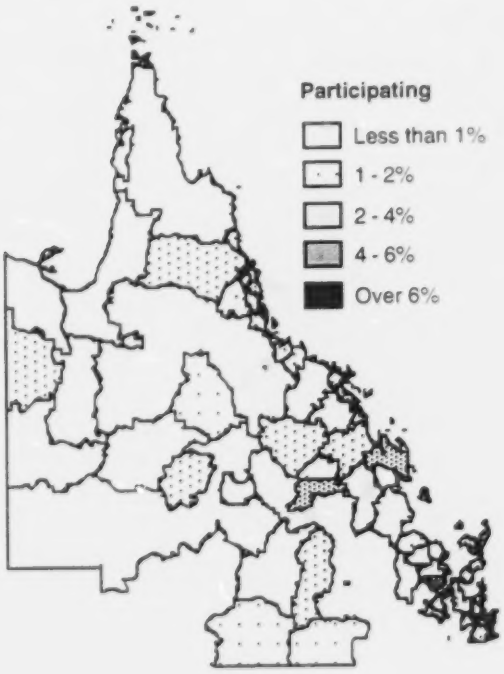
Queensland
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Profile LGAs, 1991
Proportion aged over 15 qualified and participating



Notes:

'Qualified' refers to the proportion of the population aged over 15 who held a post-school qualification in June 1991.

'Participating' refers to the proportion of the population aged over 15 years participating in June 1991 attending TAFE, CAE or university or other educational institution, but excludes secondary school.



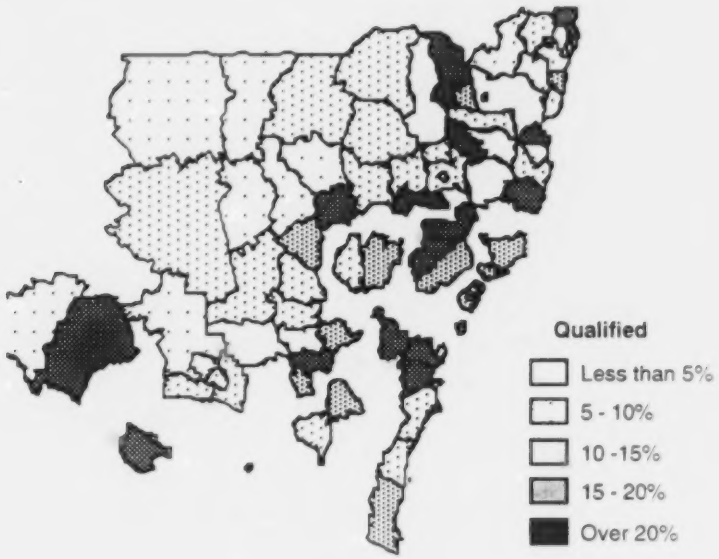
Note:
The areas with highest levels of qualification are in the major urban areas including the large provincial cities (not visible at this scale) and the Gulf shires of Yorke and Carpentaria.

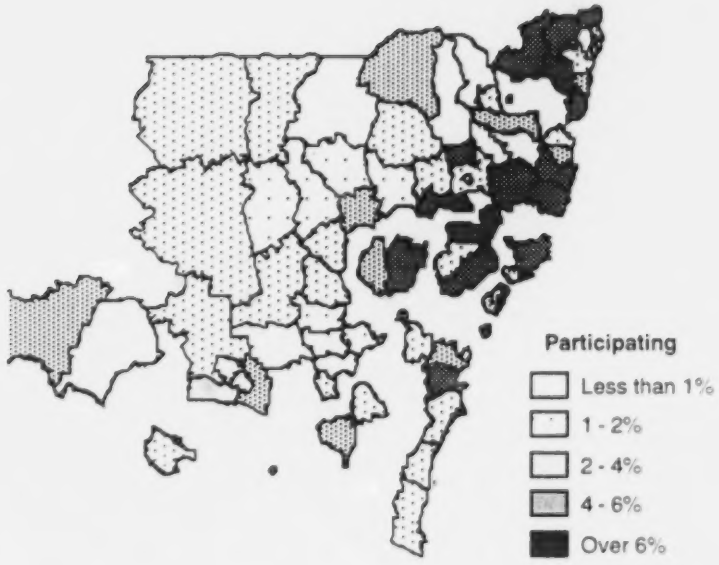
The discrepancy in comparison to Figure 2.1 is due to the higher proportions of qualified and participating people residing in the urban areas of the regions which include them.

Source: ABS, 1991 Census (CDATA 91)

Figure 2.4

New South Wales
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Profile LGAs, 1991
Proportion aged over 15 qualified and participating



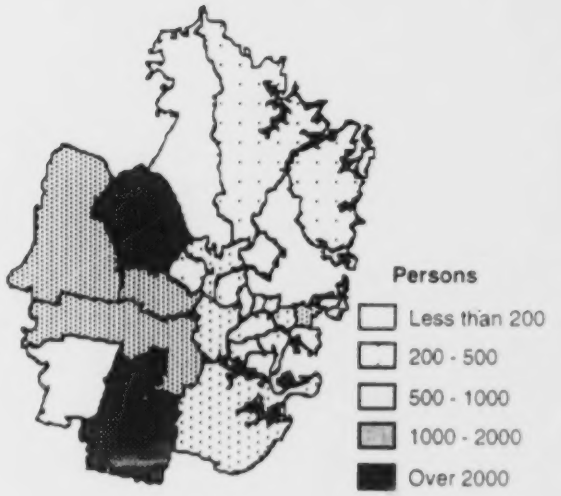


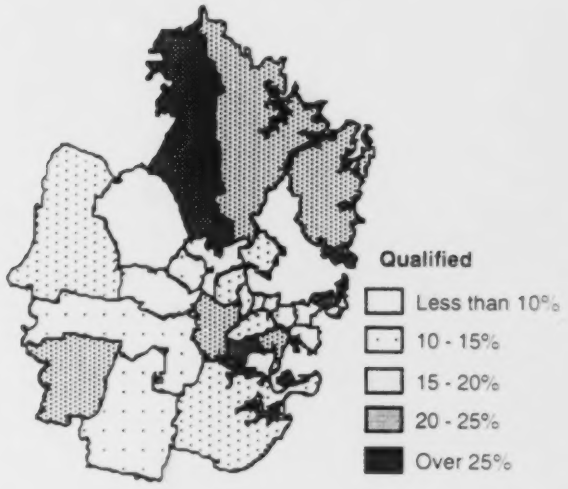
Source: ABS, 1991 Census (CDATA 91)

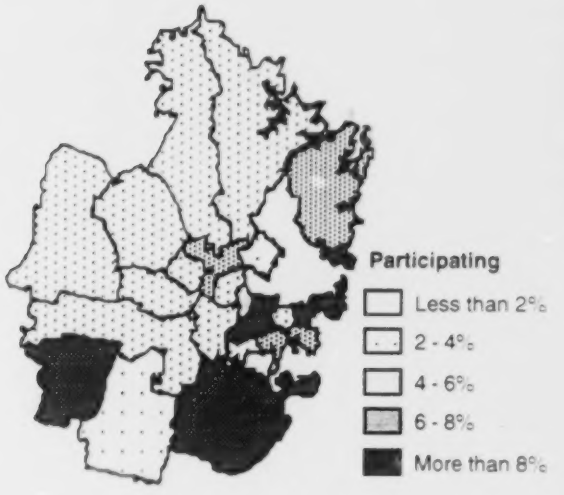
Figure 2.5

Sydney
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Profile LGAs.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population, and proportions qualified and participating in 1991.







Source: ABS, 1991 Census (CDATA 91).

Conclusion

There are several implications of this review of the literature for the research. First it is clear that there is a wide gamut of issues that might be researched in examining the factors which influence the outcomes of participation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The approach of the project was to try and keep this range of issues in mind, and to recognise there are many dimensions to participation, and different locations from which it might be examined, but particularly the experience of the individual and the policies and practices of institutions.

Second, it is important that the participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is not seen only statistical terms, though the analysis of trends discussed above is obviously an important dimension of participation. The literature suggests that participation needs to be looked at in terms of the cultural issues. In particular, the research should look closely at how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are experiencing their access to and participation in vocational education and training.

Third, there is an implication that there are many factors in participation and it is limiting to examine any one issue in isolation from others. The pathways to and from courses, promotion and entry procedures, curriculum, teaching and learning and assessment and accreditation issues are aspects of participation that have some relationship to each other. While it is impossible for any project to explore such a large range of issues, the research as far as possible attempted to keep the larger picture in view when examining specific issues. This view that the research should be holistic in its exploration of participation is also consistent with a focus on the experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Fourth, the literature tends to emphasise a perspective of government policy. However, participation can be understood from several perspectives, including that of the person and their life context and that of the institution and its policies and practices. The researchers take the position that participation is best understood as a social and cultural engagement in the kind of terms already discussed in the first chapter. Researchers therefore need to be aware of and explore multiple perspectives on the issues.

Chapter 3
The Research Process

The project aimed to bring out the cultural issues involved in Aboriginal participation in vocational education and training. The goal of the field research was to explore how indigenous Australians have experienced their educational journey, to explore how institutions have accommodated indigenous students and to see what steps had been taken to support their learning, and in this way, be able to draw some conclusions about factors that influence the outcomes of participation.

To achieve this goal, the research strategy was interpretive and collaborative, using indigenous researchers to conduct personal interviews with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and staff in teaching institutions. This section describes the rationale and the methodology of the research.

Key assumptions

The approach was based on a number of key assumptions about the way research should be conducted with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. There were a number of guiding principles.

- The main issues in the research are cultural issues.
- Participation in education and training is a cultural activity.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander 'voices' should be heard.
- Indigenous researchers should play a central role in the project.
- Participants should be progressively informed about the research.

A key assumption of the research, formed early in the planning stages, was that the cultural issues must be central. The project recognised that 'participation in education and training' is a social and cultural activity, where culture and identity can be reinforced or challenged by educational institutions. The research therefore used methods and approaches that would explore whether educational institutions were accommodating Aboriginal culture and identity, not just how well indigenous Australian students were adjusting to mainstream institutions. The project recognised that Aboriginal experiences of education have often been those of exclusion and cultural oppression.

A methodology that would be consistent with this approach was discussed at length in planning the research. At an early stage, survey methodology was rejected as a culturally inappropriate way to explore the views of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners and teachers, first, because of the long history of indigenous people being 'objects for scientific study' and secondly, because such methods can easily distort or silence the voices of indigenous people. The advantages of surveys, including the ability to reach a

representative sample and collect and process data in a cost-effective way, work against the aim of this research to bring out the cultural issues.

Third, it was doubtful that people would be prepared to participate in an impersonal survey. The shortcomings of sample-survey methods applied to investigate Aboriginal experiences of VET are illustrated by a study for the NCVER (Ensor, 1989) where a survey of Aboriginal students in TAFE achieved a very poor response. This might have been because the research was badly timed or managed, or more likely, because the researchers did not understand that the Aboriginal 'target population' might have felt this survey was a form of surveillance and control. More recent research, particularly projects conducted by indigenous researchers, have mostly used personal interview and focus groups (e.g. Folds, 1987; Tranter et al, 1995). This was the preferred approach for the project.

Indigenous Australians often say that they are 'over-researched' because social and medical research has historically treated them as objects for study. Research is often experienced as yet another form of colonisation, where people have little or no control over the form of the research or the uses made of the information. Research can be a means of expropriating indigenous knowledge and culture for 'white' purposes, however well-intentioned it may appear to be. The most appropriate form of research with indigenous people is one which is participatory (see particularly Hall and Tandon,1983; Hall and Kassam,1988; Foley and Flowers,1990,1992; Deshler and Selener,1991).

Foley and Flowers (1990) noted that research on the education and training needs of Aboriginal communities is often distorted by the bureaucratic response to those expressed needs. What the bureaucracy thought was best or what it felt best able to provide was often quite different from the kind of programs that Aboriginal people had clearly said they needed (Foley and Flowers,1990). In this context, the use of survey methodology is said to invest the researcher with the 'monopoly of knowledge' (Hall and Tandon,1983), giving them the power to define the issues and the solutions to be offered. Often the research is in a form where participants cannot recognise their input to the process.

An interpretive method

To ensure Aboriginal voices were heard, the research methodology was interpretive. Interpretive methods such as ethnography (Carr and Kemmis,1987; Hammersley,1991; Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983) can be used to interpret and represent the social and cultural meanings Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples give to their participation, allowing Aboriginal voices to 'come through' in a thematic analysis of interview materials.

Such research attempts to take the Aboriginal perspective and to bring out the meanings that make up that perspective. It shows how 'factors affecting the outcomes' are to be understood in terms of this perspective rather than 'factors' being treated in a way that detaches them from the understandings and experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have when they participate in VET. An unpublished study (Brindley, 1988) and Folds' work in *Whitefella School* (1987) shows how effective ethnography can be in depicting Aboriginal students experiences of VET. With the support of her Aboriginal students, Brindley documented their experiences of the first pilot Child Care Certificate course for Aboriginal students in NSW TAFE. She built up an account of their educational

experiences using interviews, reports of critical incidents (including encounters with racism) and classroom experiences.

A further argument for an interpretive approach is that it is meaningful to participants. The approach to the learner interview attempted to make it a worthwhile experience for the participants. This was achieved first, by the Aboriginal researchers focusing on their 'educational story' in order to establish a relationship and give a broad context for the rest of the interview. Secondly, at a later stage of the research, the participants were provided a copy of the interview record and the draft chapter on the learner interviews. One source of validity for interpretive research is participant validation - participants should be able to recognise their own stories in the reporting of the research.

Going further, the research should be actionable by participants and increase, rather than diminish the possibilities of effective social and political action. It has been argued that research with oppressed groups should be judged as to whether it has a 'transformative' potential - that is, whether participants will experience it as beneficial, equitable, ethical and emancipatory, according to Deshler and Selener (1991). Though by no means a participatory study, the research took some steps toward this ideal - by taking an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspective on the issues, by making the participation of local Aboriginal researchers central to the research strategy and by providing participants with feedback from the research process.

The kind of research undertaken was time consuming in its planning and in the way it brought together people to define and explore the issues in a collaborative way to shape the perspectives through which 'the issues' are going to be understood (see Reason and Rowan, 1981). The research was asking Aboriginal people to define the issues from their experience. This was impossible without collaboration with Aboriginal researchers. The well known study of the development of a 'two-ways' education in the Northern Territory in setting up the Batchelor College teacher education program (Raymattja Marika, Dayngawa Ngurruwutthun and White, (1992) illustrates how the cultural meanings of research have to be at the forefront in planning and carrying through research.

A collaborative approach

The research approach grew out of collaboration of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal members of the research team. The key to the project was the study of student experiences. The team developed a Learner Interview based on the idea of 'mapping the learner's educational and life journey' before exploring their experience of a current or recent course. The interview was structured in terms of a number of themes to be explored and was designed to be conducted as a conversation between the Aboriginal researcher and student. Indigenous researchers were also employed to conduct the Institution Interview. (Both interviews are further described below).

The collaborative approach did not mean that researchers would be expected to act as 'agents' of a non-Aboriginal research team. The research was able to call upon Aboriginal educators some with prior research experience, and an association with the university and its Aboriginal program. The research team itself comprised both Aboriginal and non-

Aboriginal members. In addition, an Aboriginal advisory group provided feedback on the research planning at an early stage.

The research process was set up to provide a training experience for indigenous researchers. Several steps were taken in this respect:

- Running a training workshop which explained the research, discussed ethical issues in their involvement and sought their advice about the strategy
- The research team provided copies of interview materials to participants
- The indigenous researchers provided sections of the draft report to participants
- A de-briefing of the project with researchers at a workshop was planned

Researchers were briefed on their role in the project and their views of the interview process were taken into account. The workshop agreed that an informal conversational approach exploring themes in an educational journey would be more successful than a formal interview. In the case of the educational institutions, a sample-survey approach was considered, but the team decided for similar reasons that a telephone interview would be more appropriate.

The workshop also explored ethical issues in the interviewing and in the researchers relationship to the project team. Most of the researchers were past or present students of the university and were well-known to the research team. The issue of how information was to be recorded was discussed, emphasising that verbatim quotation from the interviews would allow Aboriginal voices to be heard, though no person would be identified by this process. Participants would also be told that information would be taken in note form (depending on the consent of the learner), and that privacy and confidentiality were assured because their identity need only be known to the researcher and the report would not identify anyone by their actual names or locations; and that researchers would report back with a draft of the material before it was included in the report, and later provide a copy of a summary report in plain English.

There were several ethical issues discussed with the participating researchers. They would be paid for the work and acknowledged as research associates in the authorship of the report. Support would be provided by members of the research team to provide de-briefing and advice by phone where necessary.

A final stage of the research included a de-briefing of the interview process, in which researchers commented on the draft report and gave their feedback about the significance of the findings coming out of the research. The indigenous researchers were therefore a touchstone for the validity of the research strategy throughout the process.

The research methodology therefore developed an interpretive and collaborative approach. It used personal and telephone interviews with Aboriginal students in a range of VET providers (including universities, for purposes of this project) and consultation with Aboriginal colleagues and researchers. As previously mentioned, it emphasised three main areas of experience of participation: students pathways, their issues and concerns and language and literacy issues. The research process is depicted in Figure 3.1.

Figure 3.1
The Research Process

Literature review
Literature review of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander vocational education and training policy and research carried out by an indigenous Australian consultant

Participation analysis
Analysis of 1991 Census data and national VET statistics on the qualifications and participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in education and training

Learner pathways and experiences
Learner interviews (n=70) conducted in five states by local indigenous researchers exploring the educational pathways and concerns of learners

Institution interviews
Institution interviews (n=47) conducted by indigenous Australian researchers with staff in TAFE and higher education institutions who provide programs designed for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students

Language and literacy
An analysis of language and literacy issues, including bi-culturalism and use of Aboriginal languages, literacy courses as preparation for further study, language and culture contact in the classroom and language and the assessment of academic learning tasks

Consultation
Consultation through researcher workshops and feedback of materials via researchers to the participants

The learner interview

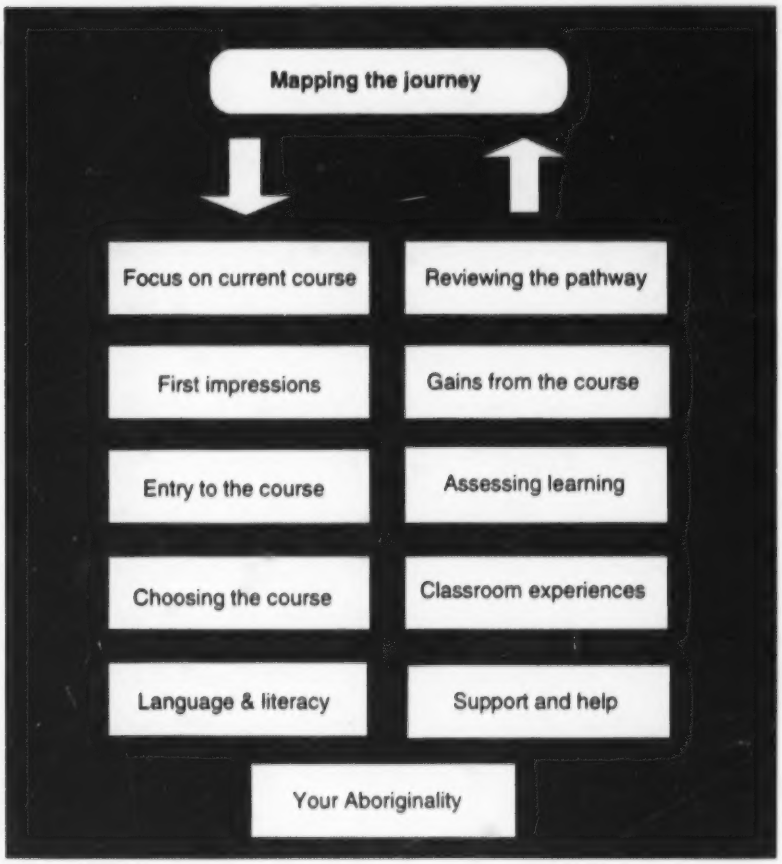
Interviews with some 70 people were conducted in five states by local researchers, six women and one male. The interview began by the interviewer working with the participant on 'mapping' their educational journey in the context of their life story. This was done in diagram form. The mapping was helped by prompts by the interviewer about such events as the schools they attended, when they left, their first work experiences, what they did next and so on, leading up to their current or recent course.

The interview then explored in a conversation their perceptions and experiences of this current or recent course. Each page of the interview (reproduced at Appendix 2) was a 'topic' which could be talked over informally. Each topic had a number of prompts which the interviewer could use to explore in further depth. The topics formed a sequence for the conversation as follows:

- how the person came to choose the course;
- what were the entry requirements;
- what were first impressions of the course;
- what was the experience of enrolment;
- to what extent was Aboriginal culture taken into account;
- how a number of language and literacy issues were handled;
- the extent of support and help provided by the institution;
- their classroom experiences;
- the nature of assessment in the course;
- the outcomes they had gained from the course.

The information collected by the interview was qualitative in nature. Brief notes were taken by the interviewer. Researchers were not encouraged to tape interviews since this was felt to be intrusive. These responses were later entered on a database for a comparative analysis, for example, by showing all responses to the same topic together. The pathways were summarised in short stories. Figure 3.2 illustrates the way the topics were linked in a sequence following from and leading back to the person's 'map' of their educational journey.

Figure 3.2
The learner interview



Selection of participants

Candidates had to be in education or training or have recently completed a course in some tertiary institution. Four criteria were used to set up categories for selecting people for interview. Each researcher was asked to interview ten people, with at least one person from each of the following categories:

- Male, younger than 35, in paid employment
- Male, younger than 35, not working
- Male, older than 35, in paid employment
- Male, older than 35, not working
- Female, younger than 35, in paid employment
- Female, younger than 35, not working
- Female, older than 35, in paid employment
- Female, older than 35, not working

Not working referred to someone unemployed, at home taking care of family, retired or a student. Working referred to someone in paid work, either full-time or part time but could include someone working voluntarily in an Aboriginal community organisation.

Seventy interviews were conducted by seven researchers, six women and one man, in five states or territories - three researchers in NSW, two in Queensland, one in South Australia and Western Australia, one in the Northern Territory. The contact with WA participants was made by telephone by an experienced community worker from that state who was living in NSW.

The indigenous researchers were mainly older women and graduates in education. Attempts to involve more male researchers were not successful due mainly to the work pressures of those invited to participate. Most of the researchers worked in their local areas and their respondents were people in these areas. The sample therefore represents a number of non-metropolitan or remote areas: the NSW North Coast, NSW South Coast, Batchelor in the Northern Territory, South West Queensland, and the Kimberley area in WA. Other researchers were based in communities in Brisbane and South Western Sydney.

Table 3.1 summarises the characteristics of the learners.

Table 3.1
Characteristics of learners interviewed

State	n	Sex		Age		Employment	
		M	F	-35	+35	Yes	No
NSW	32	15	17	14	18	14	18
Qld	16	6	10	6	10	8	8
NT	5	1	4	3	2	2	3
SA	2	1	1	-	2	-	2
WA	15	7	8	5	10	8	7
Total	70	30	40	28	42	32	38

Some limitations of the sampling method are important for interpreting the data presented in this report. In particular, students who dropped out or failed are less likely to be represented in the sample, for several reasons:

- The instructions to researchers required them to talk to people who had experienced an educational pathway. The sample therefore excludes indigenous Australians who had never experienced post-school education and training, or those who had a negative experiences.
- The researchers were graduates who had themselves successfully completed an educational journey. They may have selected for interview people who had similar experiences of success. Also, students with negative pathway experiences may have been less willing to be interviewed.

- Younger males appeared less willing to be interviewed than other categories, such as older students, and thus young men are under-represented. This conclusion was confirmed by researchers at the final workshop in June 1996.
- The sample included no person currently in custody, which is significant for the young men mentioned, since prisons are often one place where some young males gain access to VET.

Where an individual student is mentioned in the remainder of the report, they are identified by a pseudonym. Their characteristics - approximate age, sex and employment - are summarised for reference in Appendix 3.

The institution interview

A second phase of the research was to examine pathways and factors affecting outcomes from the perspective of education and training institutions. A limited number of education and training institutions including universities were selected for an interview conducted by telephone in October and November 1995 and March 1996. A copy of the interview schedule is in Appendix 4.

The interview involved a selection rather than a random sample of institutions. The focus of the research was on the institution's experience of Aboriginal students. Those interviewed were staff directly involved with Aboriginal programs - that is courses where institutions have set up particular arrangements such as block release teaching in order to accommodate the needs and cultures of indigenous people. Wherever possible, and this was the vast majority of respondents, the person contacted was a Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. It was felt to be neither practicable nor particularly productive to attempt a wider assessment of the experiences of teaching staff who had minimal knowledge or involvement of these programs - for example, where teachers may have had individual indigenous Australians in their classes. Therefore, the principles for selecting institutions were:

- Only institutions with a significant Aboriginal programs were considered, selected from those with the highest enrolments of indigenous people in 1993.
- Most institutions were selected from States with the highest Aboriginal populations (Queensland and NSW)
- The focus of the interview was the course, rather than institution, and the aim was to contact the course co-ordinator, or someone with day-to-day involvement with students
- The interviewer was an Aboriginal person and in the first instance they attempted to speak with an Aboriginal staff member about the course.

Appendix 5 lists the pool of TAFE and higher education institutions with highest Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people enrolled for the year 1993 from which the respondents were selected. Of more than 55 institutions contacted, some 47 gave interviews. Where it proved inordinately difficult to make contact with a course co-ordinator, the interview was

not pursued (about 5 cases). One limitation of the interviewing was that independent Aboriginal organisations were relatively under-represented including some who declined to participate in the research. Table 3.2 shows the breakdown of the institutions who interviewed.

Table 3.2
Characteristics of providers

State	TAFE	University	Other	Total
NSW	7	9	1	17
Qld	5	3	-	8
SA	5	4	-	9
WA	4	8	1	13
Total	22	25	0	47

There are a number of limitations to the sample. Victoria and Tasmania were not included because of their smaller relative indigenous populations. The Northern Territory is not represented and WA is somewhat over-represented. However, the interviews focused on the main courses attended by people rather than place of residence. The courses and institutions are given in Appendix 6. By far the largest group of courses were preparatory, bridging or foundational in nature, whether they were provided by TAFE institutions, universities or other providers.

This should be borne in mind in interpreting the interview responses discussed below, since the nature of the course and its accommodation to the needs of indigenous people was the main focus of the interview. Two-thirds, or the vast majority of respondents were Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. (Further details of the interview are given in the relevant chapter).

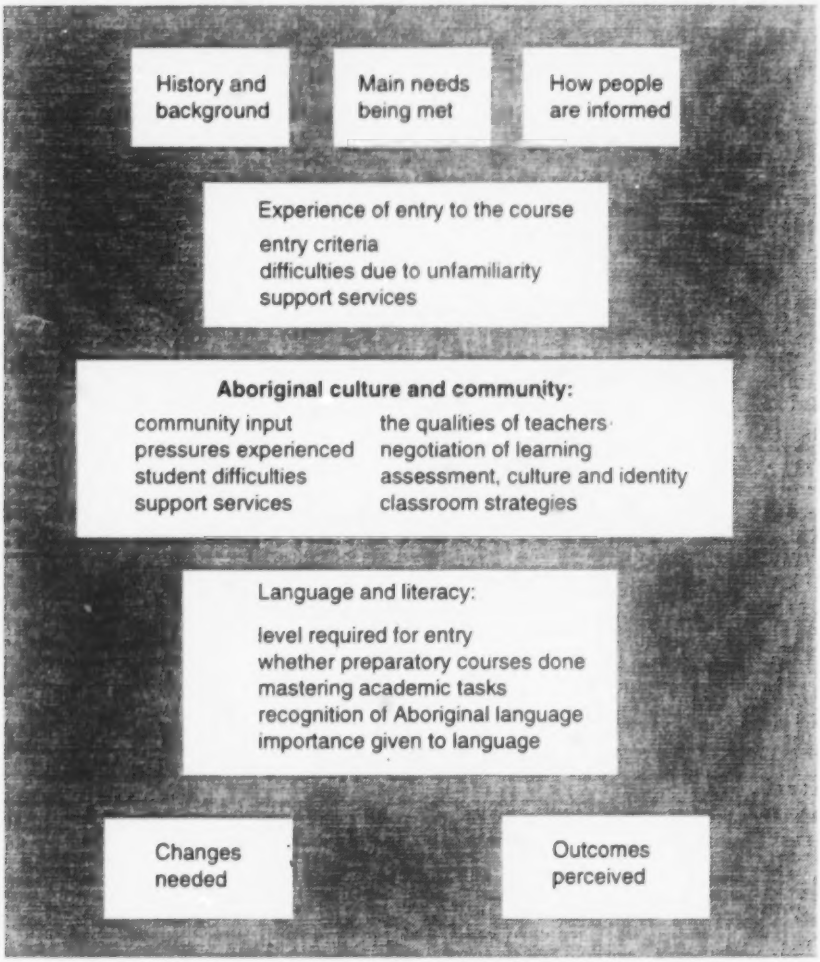
The design of the interview

The institution interview was designed to be given over the telephone and take less than an hour to conduct, recognising the work pressures of those likely to respond. It was designed with a sequence of questions in mind. The scope of the interview was first explained before the respondent was asked to say something about the history and background of the course and the kind of needs it was perceived to be meeting. The interviewer then asked about entry to the course, and how prospective students are recruited. The next and important section highlighted the relationship of the course to Aboriginal culture and community, particularly how culture was taken into account in every aspect of the educational process. This led to an exploration of language and literacy issues. The respondent was then asked about their perceptions of the outcomes of the course and the kind of changes that they would like to see to make it respond more effectively to the needs of indigenous people.

Again, the information collected by the interview was mainly qualitative in nature and taken down in note form and entered on a database. A number of checklists were used to

collect information such as the institution's entry requirements or the kinds of assessment used.

Figure 3.2
The institution interview



Language and literacy issues

The learner and institution interviews both explored language and literacy issues in participation in vocational education and training. Language and literacy was explored in the context of other educational issues, for example, issues in assessment. In the learner interview, people were asked:

- What skills or knowledge did you need to get into the course? How did you find out about them?

- To get into the course, did you have to pass any English language and literacy assessment? If so, what were the tests? Was the assessment appropriate to your experience? To your Aboriginality? To the course?
- Did the assessment recognise your Aboriginal language skills (including Aboriginal English)?
- Have you attended any preparatory English language and literacy courses? And did this course prepare you for the course entry requirements? How?
- Does the course have a specific focus on English language and literacy and the language of learning?

Language and literacy issues cannot be easily compartmentalised as they are bound up with most aspects of the experience of formal education and training, from application, selection and entry to classroom interaction and the cultural issues in the framing of curriculum content and assessment of learning. These issues were therefore also picked up in questions such as:

- Is the course dealing with difficulties indigenous Australians experience in academic learning?
- What would you like to see included in courses that would assist you in your learning, in terms, for example, of literacy?
- Do the teaching activities draw on your experience? Have you had any influence on the kind of learning activities offered? If not, how would you like to contribute to the design of the course? How would you change it? for example: use of Aboriginal languages, help with English language and literacy.

Similarly the institution interview had a section which explored similar issues. Co-ordinators of courses were asked questions such as:

- Do students need a particular level of language and literacy to do the course? If so how is this assessed?
- What kind of preparatory courses have students attended before coming into the course? Are these courses helpful? If so in what way?
- What do teachers do in the classroom to help students learn effective essay writing or in learning to use technical language or other academic tasks?
- Are Aboriginal languages including Aboriginal English used in the classroom? If so, how are they used?
- How important do people (staff, students) think it is to develop skills in English language or literacy? For example, through specific learning activities?
- To what extent does assessment take into account the cultural and language background of the students?

These issues are analysed and discussed in a separate chapter of the report, as well as being referred to where they arise in the chapters on learners' experiences and the views of institutions.

Analysing the interview data

Some comments on the way the interview data was analysed and written up in the following chapters is needed, for several reasons.

First, there is the difficulty often encountered in managing the volume and complexity of qualitative data, as distinct from numerically coded responses. The researcher has to resolve a number of problems including comparing responses by all respondents to the same question or topic, forming some idea of the range of responses to a question and classifying these into different types or categories. Second, the researcher has to later 'exhibit' or demonstrate their analysis of the material, which entails extracting quotations from the database and in some way coding the source or location of these responses in the corpus of interviews, so that the reader can identify which respondent and to which part of the interview the response refers.

Third, the researcher wants to ensure that the analysis is comprehensive and systematic, as a necessary step in checking the validity of generalisations made about the corpus of data. They need to find effective ways to interrogate the data, sorting and sifting responses. That is, the interpretive work of developing an analysis of the kind presented here is an iterative process with the analysis being progressively refined.

The aim of qualitative analysis in the present research, to restate the main methodological point made earlier, is to understand the 'perspectives' of the respondents and to bring these perspectives out in the discussion of the material in a way that ensures that 'Aboriginal voices are heard'.

It is therefore appropriate to highlight some of the procedures that were used to manage the data analysis and generate the account of the interview material. The following procedures refer to the learner interview for the sake of clarity:

- The researchers collected information from the students they interviewed and returned this on the interview schedule. This information was then entered on the database in fields corresponding to the interview layout.
- Each topic of the interview was treated as a database record. Each record was identified by a code-name, the topic name and a number. Thus each interview generated ten database records.
- The database was therefore made up of over 700 records from 70 interviews. These records could be sorted and searched independently of the original interview. This allowed all responses to one topic, for example, 'First impressions of the course', to be brought together, printed out and compared.

- The entire database could be searched for a phrase such as 'Aboriginality' or 'culture' or 'identity' to find all references to this topic across all of the topics of the interview.
- Additional interpretive fields could be added to the database to aid analysis. For example, the pathways data, obtained as a drawing or diagram, was written out as a story in a field and classified by type.
- Any response referred to in the analysis could be located by its codename (or later, the pseudonym of the respondent), the topic and its serial number. (Numbers were allocated in interview order.)
- Quotations from the database could be exported as text for inclusion in the draft report.

An important feature of the database used in the project (Filemaker Pro for Macintosh) was the ability to display data in different ways in a variety of 'layouts'. Examples of these layouts are provided in an Appendix 7.

Conclusion

This chapter has described the research process, emphasising its interpretive and collaborative features and arguing that this approach is consistent with the need to hear indigenous Australians experiences in vocational education and training as learners and providers.

In the following reporting of the interview materials, quotations from the interviews are set alongside the commentary of researchers to emphasise that the views and experiences of Aboriginal learners and providers were the basis for the analysis and to allow readers to see relationships in the material more readily.

Chapter 4
Learners and Their Experiences

This part of the report examines the experiences of learners as they were described in the interviews with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. The first section describes the education and training pathways of learners in relation to their life experiences. The second and longer section reports on the issues and students' views on a number of key topics raised through the interview.

Pathways

The learner interview was based on the idea of 'mapping' the person's educational and life journey before exploring their experience of a current or recent course. The mapping established the context for the interview and clarified the overall pattern of the learner's educational experience for the researcher.

This information about pathways was entered on a database, so that different pathways could be compared. The 'maps' produced by the interview represent individual stories which are in essence difficult to compare. The analysis of the maps examined the pathway and looked for a number of common 'events' that an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person might have experienced. These included events such as -

- at what age the person left school
- whether the person had training or education after leaving school
- kind of working life and whether unemployed
- whether the person had married and/or had a family
- whether they had worked for government, an Aboriginal agency, their own business or a private company
- whether they had done a labour market program
- whether they had entered TAFE or university in later life
- whether they had dropped out of a course

The purpose of mapping the educational and life journeys of learners was not just to describe patterns of learners' educational experiences but also to identify the way social and economic circumstances and government policy decisions influence these experiences.

It is very evident how broad changes in employment patterns and changing nature of work have impacted on work opportunities for indigenous people over the lifetime of the older respondents. There is, for example, much less unskilled physical work and relatively more community-based and professional and administrative employment than there was for earlier generations whose options for both education and work were severely restricted.

It is also very evident how changes in Aboriginal education and employment policy have affected the range of educational and work opportunities available to Aboriginal people, and employment and education and training participation are closely linked from many of the learners interviewed. Individual choices and motivations are affected by both the labour market and government policies in access and equity, reconciliation, employment education and training programs and financial support. These wider factors can be discerned in the pathways described.

The pathway stories of individuals are usually cited in the following analysis to highlight one or more themes, one aspect of the experience of work and education and training and its links to personal goals or community life. Yet any one story will illustrate the intertwining of a number of themes that are common to the experience of many indigenous people - the theme of scarcity of work, the need to move from community to city in search of work or access to education, and the theme of returning to community and to 'do more' for Aboriginal people's struggle; the theme of accessing education and training because it is highly relevant to work or community roles, or because it was denied earlier in life; and the theme of the importance of family life and child rearing.

Some clear patterns emerge from the pathways analysis:

- There are great differences between the stories of younger and older people. The older have had more experiences and have more detailed pathways. They have also had different experiences because of changes to the economic and social circumstances of the generations.
- Most of the older people are coming to education later in life, whereas the younger people are experiencing education and training earlier in life.
- Many older people come to their education and training through an involvement as elders in their community work.
- Many people had moved around in their schooling and through their work life, particularly from the country to urban centres and often back again. Sometimes this was in order to get work, or go with parents looking for work.
- There are marked gender differences in the experiences of learners. While older people are more likely to have experienced unskilled and casual work, women worked as domestics or in nursing roles, and men in labouring or plant operation. Both often worked factory work.
- Women seem more likely to have come to community work and then education and training through their closer involvement with the care and schooling of their children.

The typical pathways experienced by Aboriginal people are illustrated in this section by summaries of the stories of individuals. These stories do not identify those individuals - the names used are fictitious and certain details are not referred to. The people whose stories appear have been consulted about their stories being used. (The number cited next to the pseudonym of the learner refers to a location in the database.)

Older people

Though the researchers were asked to interview roughly equal numbers of older and younger people, more older people agreed to be interviewed. There was some difficulty, already noted in a previous chapter, in getting younger males to agree to be interviewed. The average age of those interviewed was between 35 and 40, and therefore older Aboriginal people and their life experiences are strongly represented in the research.

The dominant pathway of older people is one which leads to education late in life. Many of their stories give a picture of hard physical working lives on farms, such as weeding or crop picking, or in factories or domestic work. Both and women experienced this kind of work.

> Alice was born in northwestern NSW and is nearly fifty. She went to the mission school but was excluded from high school because she was Aboriginal. She worked as a domestic in the town and then moved to Sydney where she did factory work and later was married. Moving to the north coast she worked briefly in TAFE and then moved back home to raise her family, doing seasonal work such as cotton chipping for years. She then helped in a women's refuge, doing on the job training and becoming permanent, and assisted at the preschool. At about forty years of age, she started general skills in TAFE and is currently doing her Certificate in Adult Further Education. (Alice, 14).

Older men may have worked as plant operators in crane or grader driving or cement plant operation. Perhaps three or four men had been apprentices and worked in skilled jobs and a small number of the women had been nurses or secretaries. A few men had worked in retailing or run their own businesses. (These gender differences are discussed later).

> Tom grew up on a mission near a coastal town where he went to primary school. After attending high school in the town, he worked briefly as an apprentice painter before joining the railways and doing factory work in Sydney. He then worked as a storeman and fork lift driver for the government department for a number of years before moving back home where he worked in an Aboriginal medical centre, ran a shop and worked as a salesperson before starting a course to train for work in an Aboriginal nursing home, concurrently with a TAFE course. He is currently gaining work experience at the local hospital. (Tom, 579).

This pathway can sometimes be a road which leads from a life of physical labour to a move into community work and positions of community responsibility, which then lead to a desire for vocational education and training. Charlie's story illustrates how personal educational goals are only now being pursued late in life.

> Charlie was born during the war in Sydney and moved around with his family going to various schools. He left school at the end of sixth grade and worked in various casual labouring jobs until his first permanent work in a wool processing plant. He moved to the coast and did farm work, bean picking and carting hay and worked as

> a handyman at the mission. At the end of the 'sixties he was working in forestry before moving to jobs with the shire council as a plant operator. Aboriginal 'resettlement' saw the family move to north west NSW before he returned to the coast where he worked with Aboriginal organisations for the next fifteen years. In the same year he became an ATSIC regional councillor, he began basic education with TAFE. He later enrolled in community health, but then went back to vocational preparation gaining his certificate in ABE. (Charlie, 123)

A number of older men and women in later life, as they become elders in their own communities, feel a desire to do work with their people, and this factor brings them to enter formal vocational education and training.

> Sam is nearly sixty. He grew up in the north-west where he went to Catholic schools, leaving at 16 and entering a carpentry apprenticeship. He qualified and worked for more than twenty years in industry in Broome. He then got involved with the Aboriginal Visitors Scheme (visiting Aboriginal prisoners in gaols) and a new counselling and support service that grew out of this scheme, running counselling workshops. He then started a university bridging course and was then accepted into a degree course in Aboriginal health by block release, which he feels will equip him to work with his people especially in the area of mental health. (Sam, 466)

Sandra's story illustrates this later transition into community work and vocational education and training. It also illustrates the theme of moving from community to the city and later, a return to community.

> Sandra attended Catholic schools in north west WA, leaving at about 13 years of age. She did it hard in hotels, the meatworks and as a domestic. She then moved to Perth for the sake of her children's education, staying and working there as a nursing assistant for many years. At 40 she returned to the north west and worked for several years in alcohol rehabilitation doing workshops and counselling and then for some years in Aboriginal women's refuges. In 1994, at the about fifty, she began her university course in counselling. (Sandra, 476).

As people have got older, they have found unskilled jobs harder to get. Sometimes other factors, such as family illness or work injury have helped to push them out of the labour market and into full-time education, and this theme is perhaps most marked in the stories of the older men.

> Ray is in his mid-fifties. His family moved around a lot and he left school at 14 after many changes of school. He has had a life of unskilled work, starting with farm work, railway ganging and labouring and plant operation. Severe illness in his family forced him to give up work to care for his spouse, then he found he couldn't get the work he had in the past because he was 'too old'. He felt it was time to 'pick up on his education', learn to use computers or get a certificate that would give him steady work like fork lift driving. He is attending TAFE in suburban Perth. (Ray, 396)

> Malcolm went to school in a 'sugar belt' town in northern Queensland and worked in the cane-fields from 14 years of age. Later he started a business management course in TAFE but had to drop out after a few weeks because of family commitments. He then spent more years in labouring work, and having moved to Brisbane, completed a general skills course. He went back to labouring but an injury to his back made him unable to do physical work. He wants to do administrative work and enrolled in his current pre-tertiary course to gain the skills for university study. (Malcolm, 276).

Unemployment and few prospects of work also push people into vocational education and training, but with age can come a feeling that it is time to catch up on education that was denied to them earlier in life because of racial exclusion or economic pressures. There may be a desire to provide role models of educational participation for younger people.

> Sid grew up in the northwest of Australia and later moved to Perth where he finished his secondary schooling before leaving at about 15. He describes his working life for thirty years as 'casual work on and off' including root grubbing and grape picking and other labouring. At fifty years of age he started a course at TAFE at about the same time he became an ATSIC councillor for his region. Being involved with an Aboriginal organisation like ATSIC, he felt it was time to 'get my education' , to get a certificate and work his way to higher studies. He also felt it was important to be a role model for his children. (Sid, 496)

The theme of 'moving around' refers not only to the search for work and a better life, but the connection to community. Kaye was taken from her family, and the search for family led eventually to education and training.

> Kaye grew up on a mission in the Territory but was taken away as a child too young to remember her family and adopted out in Sydney. After leaving school, she returned to the Territory to find her family, working in domestic jobs in Darwin. After the Cyclone Tracey disaster in 1974 she left town and 'went bush' for the next ten years where she had her children. At the age of forty, she enrolled and completed a one year course at Batchelor College in her main area of interest, arts and crafts. (Kaye, 678)

Sometimes Aboriginal employment strategy has created opportunities for individuals to start out on a career path in government work in clerical work and administration, or in policy and liaison.

> Paul is about 40 years old. He grew up in outer metropolitan Sydney where he attended a state high school. After leaving at 16, he had various jobs including labouring with a government authority, then worked in the private enterprise as a truck driver and storeman, interspersed with periods of unemployment. He later became a clerical assistant through an Aboriginal employment scheme, passed the public service examination and for several years held short term positions in a number of government departments. A few years ago he completed a work

placement at a university, and a bridging course leading to further study. He is currently a full-time student in an arts degree. (Paul, 335)

Shirley grew up near Port Augusta in South Australia where she went to the mission school, later attending a technical girls school in Adelaide. Before she married at eighteen she worked in the post office, and did factory work and grape-picking. She stayed at home for 'a long while' and did missionary work for many years. At about fifty she started work with the state government in Aboriginal housing and later health work in an Aboriginal organisation. She is now studying Aboriginal community management in TAFE, feels she is upgrading skills like computing and being active because she likes working with people and doesn't like 'sitting around'. (Shirley, 513)

Other people have had an experience of more continuous employment, and less experience of leaving school early for unskilled work or unemployment. Some women have had a long career, for example, in nursing, clerical or secretarial jobs.

Ellen went to several primary schools, but then did not attend high school, and received 'home schooling'. At 13 she went to work in a factory. At 15 she became a nursing assistant, sat for the nurses' entrance examination and was trained as a nurse. Later she specialised before moving to Queensland where she continued her nursing studies. As her family grew up, she started voluntary work in schools, but she was not happy with her children's educational experiences. She decided to enrol in university course to see at first hand the workings of the system, enrolling at fifty, a year behind her children in the same course. (Ellen, 212)

Noelene was born in the nineteen-fifties and completed most of her schooling by correspondence. She left school at 15 years of age and began work as an assistant in a private nursing home. Nursing care in private and public hospitals was to be her main work right up until the time she changed careers to teaching after completing a bridging course at a college of advanced education at the age of about thirty. This course led her into studying her Diploma of Teaching for three years, while she worked in an Aboriginal liaison role and continued nursing 'back home' in the holidays. Later she became a teacher in a rural school near home and then came back to the university as a lecturer in the Aboriginal Education unit. She is currently completing her Bachelor of Education degree at another university. (Noelene, 326)

For some, their vocational education and training comes at the end of a long period of work in government in policy or liaison work, where perhaps they have become frustrated at a lack of recognition or found their career blocked in some way.

Raylene is about forty. She attended several primary and high schools before being expelled from the last at fifteen. After a break of nine years she did a small business and office skills training course which got her access to training course for a job in community services. From then on she did a wide range of short courses including counselling, writing, interviewing, child protection and adoption,

and train the trainer. She saw that there was no further career or promotion without a degree, and she was angry that white professionals had used her expertise without acknowledgment because she didn't have a qualification. She was able her to gain credit in a bridging course and then gained a scholarship for full time study and graduated in social work. She has since been very active in the policy work in her state. (Raylene, 416)

Younger people

Obviously the younger people differ from the older in that they have had less experience than their elders, so their pathways are shorter and less complex. But there are also other differences. They have had longer schooling, though most left at Year 10 and very few stayed on to Year 12. The older people often left school to go into unskilled work, because they had to support their family and generally faced more barriers to entry to education or training. In comparison, the younger people are much more likely to have started education and training straight after school.

Younger people have been able to benefit early in their lives from programs set up specifically for Aboriginal and Torres Straits Islander people.

> Bert is a little over thirty. After attending the mission school and going on to high school, he left at Year 11 when he gained plumbing apprenticeship with the railways. He moved to Sydney and finished the apprenticeship in the public hospital system, after which he went back home. Returning to Sydney, he worked in the civil construction industry for several years before again going home, doing a Skillshare engineering course and going on a job scheme with the local council. At the time of the research he was doing the tertiary preparation course at TAFE with the idea of bettering his language and writing skills and getting into teaching plumbing at TAFE. (Bert, 93)

The policy emphasis on training indigenous people for teaching and educational work has opened opportunities for younger people in the sample, and possibly the researchers felt these would be interesting students to interview for the research. Jack is one example of a person who is moving into educational work.

> Jack is a young man who left school at 16 and joined the Australian army where he received some training in the three years he served. He worked for a while in a government department and then had a period of labouring before going to TAFE. Wanting to 'achieve something that has not been available to other family members and friends' he did a tertiary bridging course and decided to convert his teaching diploma to allow him to do adult education work, because it would assist others in the community. (Jack, 255)

> Frank is a young man with an ambition to write about sport. He grew up in a capital city with most contact with his family and little contact with an Aboriginal community. He tried an arts course but found it was no use to him in his chosen

career and dropped out. The next year he applied and was successful in gaining a special entry at another university in journalism. (Frank, 201)

The experiences of Col illustrates how some younger Aboriginal people are moving between labour market programs and short periods of work and longer periods of unemployment.

> Col is about thirty years of age. He attended five or six schools in various parts of NSW before leaving at Year 10 and enrolling straight away in a certificate of general education in TAFE. He became unemployed, then started a retail traineeship, became unemployed again and then competed a Jobtrain retail course, working for a big retailer for a year. He was unemployed again for a year before getting work prefabricating buildings, became unemployed, then found kitchen work on a Get Skilled program, before going on the dole for another two years. At the time of the interview, he was completing a Skillshare course in minor building maintenance. (Col, 133)

> Debbie went to school in Sydney and left in Year 10 when she started work in a children's centre, where she worked for another five years. She then completed her Certificate of Adult Basic Education in Sydney before having her two children and staying at home. When they were old enough for school she started several courses, one in ceramics and others in Aboriginal arts and crafts, with the aim of further developing her artistic skills in order to be able to work from home. (Debbie, 171)

Perhaps another difference between younger and older people is the nature of the labour market. It may be that community work is more open to the older people. Young people's access to entry level training is a key issue and traineeships for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are more frequently mentioned in their pathways, though some of the older people also reported a change of work direction through trainee positions, for example under the Training for Aboriginal People (TAP) scheme. This change may have come after a long period of casual or unskilled work. For younger people, the traineeship may give an access to training which their parents never had.

> Carol left school a few years ago after finishing Year 12. She was unemployed for a few months before spending a few months working casually with the Botanic Gardens, after which she gained a job with them as a trainee horticulturalist for three years. She is doing a horticulture course. (Carol, 142)

> Amy is thirty. She grew up in a north coast town and went to school there until Year 10, when she attended a secretarial course at the local TAFE college, gaining a clerical traineeship in a government department in town. From there she travelled to Sydney for a while but came back home and worked as a secretary in the Aboriginal Legal Service. She then returned to Sydney and worked in a government legal section, but again came home to raise a family. She is enrolled in a Certificate in Adult Further Education in TAFE. (Amy, 24)

Labour market programs such as LEAP (Landcare Environment Action Program) and Skillshare courses are important in helping people build bridges between one kind of education and training experience and another. In some cases, the specific vocational course leads the person to re-enter general education in order to lift their academic skills to a higher level and allow them to benefit from more demanding academic courses needed for a certain line of work or to develop a career in a new direction.

> Trevor attended a senior high school but left at the end of Year 10. He spent a few weeks in work experience and then found a place in a Landcare Environment Action Program (LEAP) for six months, combining field experience and TAFE study. He stayed on at the local TAFE college, and the next year was doing part work as a gardener. He is currently doing his Certificate of General Education so he can further his studies and earn better money. He wants to do the Ranger course at university, but feels he first needs to get his skills up to scratch. (Trevor, 536)

> Sally attended various while being in and out of a Catholic orphanage and foster homes. She was expelled from school in her second or third year of high school but after moving once or twice more, left finally at 17 years of age. The next ten years are unclear but include periods of casual work and unemployment. She considered the bridging course run by Curtin University, thinking of entering nursing. This she passed with distinctions. She felt a strong personal goal to 'work with my own people', but also felt that she needed a qualification and also 'wanted to be someone special'. She stuck at the nursing course for two years, but it was away from home and proved to be 'too much too fast' and she dropped out. She then got married and had children. (Sally, 486).

Like the older people, a move into an Aboriginal organisation can be an important step in leading to some related course of vocational education or training, for example in community development or community management. Sometimes there is a combination of luck and circumstances, where an Aboriginal employment strategy leads to a job and a related course, followed by a change to work in an Aboriginal organisation. There may be entry to further education and another change of career direction.

> Arthur is about 35 years of age. He grew up in Redfern and then his family moved north in childhood. After leaving school at 15, he worked in a sawmill and did various labouring jobs. About seven years after leaving school, he got work through the TAP scheme in National Parks and from there moved to work in a land council. About then, at thirty years of age, he began a Certificate in General Education through TAFE by open learning. A DEET course then helped him get a job in TAFE. Five years later, he is working in the land council and doing his Diploma Of Community Management by block release at university. (Arthur, 63).

It has already been noted that the sample may have tended to include more 'success stories' than not, because the researchers were required to find people who had experienced a pathway of some kind (rather than no pathway at all). There are no examples of prisoners and their pathways.

The story of one young male was one of struggle with family breakdown and alcohol, and it speaks of the role of a course in helping him find a new direction as an artist.

> Nathan left school in northwest NSW after completing Year 11, by which stage he was already doing seasonal work. About then his alcoholic mother moved to Sydney, while he did itinerant work for another five years and battled with his own drinking problem. After getting 'off the grog', he did some gardening training in the local Council and began a TAFE Adult Basic Education course, though he had to leave when his father died. He started attending drug and alcohol workshops and working with the Aboriginal resource centre but another bad patch with his mother saw him 'down and out' in Sydney. He picked up the CABE course again, started painting and became active in Aboriginal groups and events. He did well in a university bridging course and started a degree in welfare studies. He is now combining artwork with teaching Aboriginal Studies part time in TAFE. (Nathan, 306)

There are other examples of young people moving quite quickly into Aboriginal policy or liaison work. One young person moved directly into educational work on leaving school and has become a teacher, while another moved from a skilled trade to work in Aboriginal liaison work in an electricity authority. These are not pathways their grandparents could have easily imagined, and the young people themselves are sometimes very aware of this.

> Kerry is about 25 years of age and though young, is currently an office-holder in the Aboriginal organisations in her area. She went straight from high school into a job as an Aboriginal teaching aide while completing her Associate Diploma at university by block release, which suited her because she didn't want to be away from home for long. She is now a regional liaison officer in schools and is completing her teaching qualification over two years by residential mode. (Kerry, 43)

> Parry went to school in Western Sydney leaving at Year 10. He was unemployed for about a year but succeeded in getting an apprenticeship in boiler making with an electricity authority. He finished this and widened his experience with engineering while doing shift work as a boilermaker in other companies. He came back to the electricity authority's Aboriginal liaison unit and moved to Sydney to work in this area. He then won a scholarship for tertiary study and started the university bridging course. (Parry, 373)

Gender differences

There are clear gender differences in the stories told by learners and these are more marked in the case of older people. The family responsibilities of women loom larger in the women's stories, who in some cases moved their families to gain better access to schooling for their children and work for themselves.

While all of the older people are more likely to have experienced unskilled and casual work, women worked as domestics or in nursing roles, and men in labouring or plant operation. Women seem more likely to have come to community work and then education

and training through a close involvement with the care and schooling of their children, for example, the pathways of Sandra described above and of May and Roma.

> May is about 35 years of age. She left school at about fifteen and worked in a meat factory for two years before she got married and had three children. She stayed home for about fifteen years before doing voluntary work in a school support centre and working for the housing co-operative. This brought her to enrol in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island business administration course by block mode. (May, 267)

> Roma was born in the early 'fifties and grew up on a Methodist mission in WA, later attending an army school and later had a few years at a high school in Perth. She then did a combination of domestic science courses at the technical college before getting married at 16. She then moved to the north-west where she raised her eight children. This led her into work as a teaching aide and childcare worker. Recently she moved to Perth, giving up child care work to study her Certificate of General Education at TAFE. (Roma,446)

> Tracey grew up in the northwest of NSW, leaving high school at 16 and gaining some training in photographic processing job for a year. She then did various domestic jobs and some factory work, moving to the city and interstate doing crop-picking and other casual jobs. She then raised a family for nearly twenty years before starting a Skillshare course and gaining work experience in a school at the age of forty. She then enrolled in TAFE course for women, and the certificate in general education while helping as a volunteer at the high school homework centre. (Tracey, 569)

Younger women seem to combine work, childrearing and study in ways their mothers mostly did not.

> Danni was born in the Kimberly and grew up and went to school in a town there. She moved away for a few years after having a daughter, before moving back and working for a local Aboriginal organisation. This work led her to start an office skills course at the local TAFE college, and then on to a community development course at Batchelor College. She is studying while working in the Aboriginal organisation. (Danni, 648).

Their mothers or grandmothers may have spent most of their lives rearing large familes from an early age, only returning to formal education and training after many years.

> Born before the war, Bridget grew up in Sydney where she went to Catholic schools, leaving at the end of primary in order to look after her brothers and sisters. After doing seasonal work in the bush she married and for the next thirty years raised her large family. At fifty, she decided it was time to resume her education, starting with literacy and numeracy at the local TAFE college, completing the Adult Basic Education and the Adult General Education certificates. She then started university studies in adult education by block release, and she is currently completing her degree. (Bridget, 151)

The desire to stay in community while rearing their families may lead them into liaison work and related kinds of study, with TAFE an access point and stepping stone to later university study. Celia's story shows how some Aboriginal women become active in education and the community from the time they have their own family.

> Celia became an Aboriginal education assistant after leaving school, which she 'stuck at' for several years, then did casual fruit picking. She gained a public service job in Canberra but moved home again and had a family. She began several TAFE courses in ceramics and fashion retail for a year and half. Later she did a Skillshare business course, before being selected to work as a community educator and completing the required university diploma. She has since worked in a number of Aboriginal community liaison and training jobs with government and is currently completing her degree. (Celia, 161)

While many older people are more likely to done unskilled and casual work, the women more often worked as domestics or in nursing roles, and men most often in labouring or plant operation, whereas factory work was common for both sexes.

For younger males, there are opportunities for apprenticeship in 'traditional' areas such as mechanics. These opportunities may occur in remote and rural communities.

> Jim is just over twenty. He grew up in a remote Northern Territory community and later attended Catholic schools. Leaving at 15, he went back to the community where he got an apprenticeship on the mission as a mechanic, completing this over the next three years. He then left his job and went back to live in the community. (Jim, 668)

As previously noted, for the older men, labouring work takes its physical toll and this, coupled with shrinking opportunities for unskilled work or perhaps injury or illness, may lead them to look for a change of direction in community work, which may bring them into a vocational courses or into a general education course to upgrade their language and literacy skills.

For older men, the choices have often been between unskilled work and the dole, though the development of community organisations has widened the options, sometimes bringing them into vocational education and training for the first time.

> Richard was born in outback NSW in the nineteen-fifties. His family moved interstate during his schooling and he completed Year 10 in Port Augusta. After school he got a job labouring with the railways, where he remained working operating plant. He took redundancy and then worked as a union representative and plant operator while being unemployed on and off. At this time he felt he faced choices about the future and says after 'talking in the pub' he thought of doing a TAFE course rather than staying on the dole. He decided to make a career in primary health care and work in a rehabilitation centre or nursing. He is completing the TAFE course, and is employed as a youth worker in an Aboriginal community organisation. (Richard, 446)

These gender differences are found throughout the stories interwoven with other themes.

Conclusions

This analysis of learner pathways suggests a number of factors which affect the outcomes of the participation Aboriginal and Torres Straits islander students in vocational education and training. However, as noted before, the examples described may reflect the kind of people who were interviewed and they do not represent the experiences of all indigenous people including those who have not participated or those who have found participation to be a negative experience. Those interviewed have by and large been successful at gaining entry and experiencing positive outcomes, including employment outcomes, from their participation. Older Aboriginal people are strongly represented in the research, and so too are experiences in universities and TAFE courses, rather than labour market programs or other types of courses.

It is also the case that the 'pathways' represented here are summaries of complex and individual life experiences and they only suggest some of the complex factors that influence indigenous people to participate successfully in VET. There are, however, some general points that can be drawn out from the analysis.

- Entry to the labour market comes before education and training for many people. Older people are more likely to enter education later in life for various reasons including past barriers to entry due to racial discrimination and economic circumstances, where they had to support families and where full-time study was non-existent.
- A desire to do more for Aboriginal people can lead to work in community organisations and this can lead to vocational education and training to develop appropriate levels of skill, for example in mental health or drug and alcohol work or education.
- Older people may feel that it is time to catch up on education that they missed out on early in life, and feel a strong need to provide role models of educational success for younger people.
- A number of individuals had access to training through apprenticeship or other vocational training such as nursing or secretarial work.
- The existence of Aboriginal employment strategies has created work opportunities linked to training for individuals, especially in allowing them to enter health, education or welfare work in either community organisations or government services.
- In comparison to their elders, younger people are more likely to have started education and training straight after school. They have been able to benefit early in their lives from programs set up specifically for Aboriginal and Torres Straits Islander people.
- Aboriginal people use courses of various kinds to provide bridges between work or unemployment and participation in further education and training. This refers not only to bridging courses so-named, but also to labour market programs and general education courses (such as CABE) which people use as stepping stones.

Again, the educational and life journeys of described here have been influenced by a range of social and economic factors and by the policy decisions of government. Work opportu-

nities, as well as the ability to access vocational education and training have been constrained by changing employment patterns and changing nature of work. This is most noticeable in the case of the older respondents.

The opportunity for indigenous people to access education and training has clearly been influenced by Aboriginal education and employment policies having this objective. The linkage between access to work, particularly in community or government employment, and access to education and training is perhaps the most obvious feature of these stories. Thus individual decisions to participate and incentives to do so have to be understood in relation to these broader factors in labour market conditions and in government policies.

Learners' issues and concerns

For this section, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students were interviewed by Aboriginal researchers, for their perceptions of the key factors which affected their success in vocational education and training. From their individual learning experiences, students also identify negative factors which are seen as obstacles to success, in some cases leading to their dropping out of courses.

From these interviews, the over-riding factor identified by students for achieving success is a recognition of their Aboriginality, at each stage of the educational process. Students express satisfaction with courses where this recognition occurs:

- where the course is either specifically designed for indigenous people or contains a significant component of Aboriginal studies or perspectives
- where all or most students in that course are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people
- where staff are Aboriginal or if not, are sensitive and aware of the needs of indigenous students
- where the mode of the course and the delivery of content recognise the needs of the students
- where assessments are negotiable and time schedules are flexible to take account of family priorities
- where Aboriginal support is provided on-campus (and off-campus by an Aboriginal liaison person).

Of considerable importance also is the support of the students' family and community.

When all or some of these factors apply, students experience success and frequently recommend the course to others, and consider further education or training. In many cases, the existence of some of these factors can offset the lack of others; for example in a course where there are few Aboriginal students, the support from an Aboriginal Unit on campus becomes very important. Similarly, in a course where there is little flexibility for negotiating timeframes which allow students to meet their family obligations, the support of other students, family and community becomes increasingly important. In some instances students have dropped out of courses where they felt isolated and pressured, faced with a heavy workload or competing demands on their time, with little recognition of their individual needs as Aboriginal people. For others, experiencing conflicts with family or community members caused students to feel alienated from those whose support is often essential for success.

Overall, students interviewed in this report have succeeded in moving further along their educational and training pathway, and most reflect on their sense of personal growth or increased vocational opportunity as a result of their courses. Some are already undertaking further study. Given the commitment of institutions to access and equity, it is useful to draw on students' stories to indicate ways that teaching and administrative staff in institutions can demonstrate a sensitivity to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. This may ensure positive experiences from the earliest stages of the information dissemination process when students find out about available courses, in the enrolment, orientation and settling in periods, to providing culturally appropriate course content and methods of delivery, and negotiable and flexible assessment tasks and timeframes.

Students' responses to the interviews have been organised to reflect their views at significant moments along their educational or training pathway.

There are factors related to students' first experience of the course:

- choosing a course that is relevant to students' goals for self (personal growth and/or employment) and for the community;
- enrolment, orientation and students' first contacts with administrative and teaching staff.

A second group of factors refers to students' ability to continue the course:

- issues in accessing the course, including the travel and time affecting students' on-going attendance, participation and management of priorities;
- the importance of the recognition of students' Aboriginality in the content of a course, its delivery and assessment;
- support from family and the community, and provided within the institution.

A third group of factors concerns the completion of the course:

- the students' assessment of the outcomes of the course.

Many students come to vocational education and training unsure of what to expect and with little confidence of success, and often past educational experiences of failure. **As a child everything I did at school was wrong** (Malcolm, 281). Significantly, pre-vocational courses are found to be very positive experiences, encouraging students on to further education and giving them a sense of confidence about their abilities to cope with it. Experiences of success frequently lead students further along the educational and training pathway, with a sense that the skills and knowledge they have gained have not only improved their employability, but will be an asset to their families and communities.

Choosing a course

Reasons

I want to better myself - work my way up to a better job - working for my people, that's the main thing. (Betty, 60)

I wanted to be more competitive in the job market. Improve my career opportunities. I wanted a degree and knowledge that I could use to benefit my community. (Bob, 80)

Several themes emerge from the students' interviews to tell how and why they chose a particular course. Students were asked their reasons for selecting their present course and their responses include employment, the community value of the course and personal satisfaction, or a combination of these. While most students were enrolled in their courses to gain job qualifications or promotion, for many there is a

strong link between that job and the needs of their community. Where students give reasons of personal growth for studying, again these are often bound up with getting a job they want, and with helping their community.

When I did it, I thought I might get a good job out of it ...you can't get a bank loan if you haven't got permanent work... (this course) was the only choice I had. (Tom, 579)

In mapping their career path, some students are quite clear about their plan, and a particular course is seen as a step on a career pathway which they have researched to achieve a longer-term goal (see pathways section of this chapter). Some have chosen to specialise in a particular area of work and have returned to study in that area. Personal needs to gain self-esteem and satisfaction in a career, and to achieve life-long ambitions are frequently mentioned in the context of the chosen pathway. Other students see a course as a testing ground, to see how they can manage and if they will go further at some later time.

I just wanted to do this one and see how I would handle it. (Tony, 543)

(It should be) easy - not too much responsibility because I didn't want something too stressful after being home for a long while. (Amy, 27)

The pathways for some students lead straight from school into TAFE or university, while many older students are returning to study after some time. A significant number are enrolled in pre-tertiary or pre-vocational courses which give them a foundation from which to proceed to other courses. The pathways thus for some are fairly straightforward, and for others have been interrupted or have diverged from their original direction.

Economic factors frequently prompt enrolment in vocational education and training. Many students have chosen a particular course to qualify for a job, to be promoted or to have a chance on the labour market, as in pre-vocational literacy and numeracy courses. Student needed the Abstudy payment; for another it was the preferred option to receiving unemployment benefits, and for another an injury from an accident meant he had to retrain in a new area. For some it was a case of 'do the course or you don't have a job'.

Even though I had extensive clerical experience, I had no qualifications. (Debbie, 178)

No more promotional opportunities without a degree. (Ada, 41)

Get a qualification and set up a good career pathway. (Sid, 503)

The Land Council told me I had to do the course. If I don't do the course I don't have a job. (Arthur, 63)

Go on the dole or do TAFE, I chose TAFE. (Ruth, 433)

The desire for personal growth and improved job prospects is for many students tied into their strong sense of community. Students believe that their skills and knowledge will *benefit their community* in concrete ways, in the running of community projects such as an alcohol drying out centre, for example, or in areas such as community nursing or enterprise bargaining.

I wanted to become more actively involved in my Aboriginal community and to be able to do something constructive to help my people. (Jill, 245)

I want to work with families and support them. I want to be able to refer them to culturally relevant agencies to assist them. (Mavis, 50)

Others have wider goals in dealing with pressing social problems. For example, one student's pathway is planned to lead to researching drop-out rates of Aboriginal and Torres

Strait Islander students in education; another's pathway is intended to lead to politics, as an Aboriginal Senator representing Aboriginal interests.

Personal experience and awareness of existing local problems for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people cause many students to find solutions through education and training as with one student whose experience of family difficulties has led her to a course in social work. Secondary education for all Aboriginal young people is seen as the answer for another student after her experience in her course.

Being someone special (Sandra, 483)

to better myself (Clare, 120)

a role model for my children (Sally, 493)

I just enjoy doing the things in this course (Celia, 168)

I just didn't have anything to do at home...I was bored...do you know what it's like on the mission? Nothing to do... (Alice, 21)

To achieve something that has not been available to other family members and friends (Jack, 255)

I want to get personal gains out of this course that I can in turn contribute to the community. (Bob, 80)

A significant factor given as a reason for embarking on vocational education and training is *personal* - the need for satisfaction, enjoyment and growth, offering the possibility of adding interest and purpose to their lives.

An Aboriginal researcher on this project reported that a course in Aboriginal Studies meant a quest for identity for one student who had been adopted as a young child and raised by non-Aboriginal people, with little previous knowledge of Aboriginal history and community life.

As with many students who express a vocational goal, the personal goal is linked to their perception of their community's needs.

Information and advice

We used the Aboriginal grapevine. Yes, the Uni promoted it but other people sold it to me by word of mouth. (Parry, 383)

I want to encourage all the Aboriginal students I come in contact with to go on to year 12 and on to uni. (Arthur, 70)

I was encouraged as there were other Aboriginal nurses already at the hospital. (Trish, 601)

...I saw this course advertised in the Koori Mail. It was the only course I applied for, actually the only one I was interested in. It came at the right time. (Terri, 564)

The manager (of the nursing home) ... is my cousin, He said it was a good course and I'd get training to work (there). (Tom, 579)

An important factor in accessing vocational education and training is knowing what is available and how to enrol in it. For most interviewees it was their family and friends who influenced their choice of course, although sometimes an institution's recruiting visits to schools and publicity in newspapers such as the *Koori Mail* had caught their attention. In some instances an Aboriginal Co-ordinator or a teacher in a previous course had recommended it as the next step on the pathway to a particular goal. Occasionally the course was known to be a requirement of a job, or recommended by SkillShare. By far the most important factor identified by students in this research was word-of-mouth.

In most cases students received preliminary information about enrolments either in the mail or from Aboriginal

Units, co-ordinators and staff. Students also frequently had information from other Aboriginal students who had completed, or were currently doing the course. In some cases students had to find out all the necessary information for themselves, while for others, everything was explained by a liaison person. Most students interviewed were satisfied that they had sufficient information about the course to know what it contained, however a few were disappointed and felt that they should have had more preliminary information.

I went through the handbook and read it for three hours. (Melanie, 305)

One student found that once into her course it was not what she expected and would have liked earlier access to advice, and to have been informed about who could give that advice. With more information she would have opted for a different course. However, even with a lot of advice another student found that he had made an inappropriate choice of course.

Students' experiences of application procedures varied: for many it was just a matter of applying for the course of their first choice. For some students the only mention of their Aboriginality came when they had to tick a box on the application form, for others their Aboriginality was a requirement of an all-Koori/Murrie course, or gave special admission to a course. This posed a problem for one of the interviewed students who described her treatment as a 'special student' as racist.

Where tests and interviews are used for entry, most find them to be culturally appropriate, but several comment that they found them to be irrelevant or patronisingly simple. Most students believe that the use of a written task to determine literacy levels is reasonable. In some cases an entry exam is set and although students in this sample have been successful, one expressed feelings of intimidation in the testing situation.

Koori people (in the past) were always told they were dumb and when it came to a test they couldn't pass. (Betty, 51)

Enrolment and orientation

Just as the Aboriginal connection is a strong factor in encouraging students to enrol in a particular course, the connection continues to be essential whenever students experience difficulties, as at enrolment, in the first days of sessions and throughout the course in dealings with lecturers. Many times students refer to the support that they

It comes back to the support you get from your family. That's the most important part - and thinking about their past - mission school, racism and that - and how far we've come in one generation in our own family. (Mavis, 49)

had from family and friends which encouraged them to persevere, and the on-campus support from other Aboriginal students, Aboriginal Units, Coordinators and support staff.

Good fun ... mob of Kooris together.. comfort of having your own mob. Apart from administration, Kooris explaining process and procedures made things easier to understand. (Melanie, 305)

total confusion! (Noeline, 334)

horrendous (Jill, 247)

Enrolment was terrible. All white people. Hundreds of students. It took hours. I was so scared and frightened that I broke out in a rash and I was scratching and had to go to the toilet all the time. (Ada, 33)

I got confused like I didn't fill the form in properly, because there were words like undergraduate and I didn't know what to put in the box. (Ada, 31)

It was just great! (Shirley, 525)

I'd like to see a different orientation - to make us feel welcome and fit in with other groups. That's the hardest thing - fitting in. That's why a lot of my group left. They didn't have peer support. (Bob, 75)

It was something new but I took it all in my stride and took a couple of weeks to settle in. (Sally, 495)

Having to introduce myself in front of 30 people, of which only two were Kooris, was a total shame job. (Frank, 211)

In my first class I had to introduce myself and tell about things, where I come from and that. I was so stressed out and I wrote down every single word they said. So did the others. (Ada, 33)

I felt confident in the first class because I already knew some of the students. We all introduced ourselves and pinned our information to the wall. (Bob, 82)

It was heads down straight into work and a bit of a shock. (Sandra, 485)

Our main support came from each other. (Arthur, 71)

Enrolment is a fairly traumatic experience for many students who report feelings of confusion and anxiety at the unfamiliar processes: long queues, a lack of clear instructions, often hundreds of people. Where the institution provides support, especially from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Units or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander support staff, the situation is much improved. Where Aboriginal students are in a group, or have had previous experience of similar enrolment procedures, it is much less daunting, and the students feel much more confident than students who enrol on their own. Some institutions set aside a specific time for the Aboriginal students to enrol as a group.

Sometimes information through letters, outlines and signs is provided to assist students. The helpfulness of non-Aboriginal staff varies within institutions, and in some cases the terminology of the process is difficult.

Orientations are variously experienced as useful, confusing or non-existent! Maps and tours prove useful. Again, where there is a strong Aboriginal presence, students feel less anxious.

The first class is far less daunting for students in all-Koori classes or where there are many other Aboriginal students. Some first classes are especially traumatic for students who are asked to introduce themselves, unless they have had previous similar experience or are in an Aboriginal group.

First impressions of the work expected in the course vary, with some lecturers giving full course information, and giving students time to settle in, while others launched immediately into the work. For some students the first lectures, the jargon and the large class size are overwhelming.

Instances of negative experiences reinforce the importance of having other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in the course and the connection with other Aboriginal people continues to be important throughout.

Students experience far fewer problems, and less stress if they are a part of an Aboriginal group. When the student is the sole Aboriginal student in the course, the support from an Aboriginal Education Unit on the campus is very significant. This support is a very important factor in most students' feeling comfortable in the institution, whether by providing ongoing contact or when specifically utilised in enrolment procedures and for information about the workings of the institution.

Tensions are experienced by some students relating to age differences in their groups, as well as to the racial composition of the group. Age can be a significant factor in the experience of success in a course. Cultural factors to do with generational differences need to be understood by vocational education and training lecturers in providing learning experiences for their students. A sense of isolation may stem from being the eldest or the youngest in a group. Furthermore, older students in pre-vocational classes may experience considerable anxiety about their abilities because it has been so long since they last studied, and younger students with recent school experience may be unprepared for the size of classes and the sense of isolation that they may experience. One student suggested that there should be a range of Aboriginal advisers in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Unit, of different ages and experience to meet the various needs of the students.

...we all stuck together... (Ruth, 445)

I was shy and mixing with everyone here has helped me over that (Carol, 148)

I would not have finished the Masters if not in this type of environment (Ellen, 218)

... the only Koori at that campus, so that made it hard... (Noni, 364)

...I was shocked shitless because most people stated that I was the first Aboriginal they had personal contract with... (Rita, 415)

I was scared of the unexpected - uncomfortable with the teacher. Her expectations were far too high. She didn't take into account that we'd never been to Uni before - we needed to bring our skills up gradually. (Betty, 52)

Doing the Bridging Course helped me prepare for this course, Being part of an all Koori group gave me confidence in that setting to express myself..(and) I still maintained contact with the Aboriginal Unit during the BA - I was able to touch base, reaffirm my identity, before going back to mainstream classes (Noni, 362).

That's the hardest thing - fitting in. That's why a lot of my group left... (Bob, 75)

Some found it hard to do, because they hadn't been to school for a long time. ... They're old and they talk different. (Bob, 71)

I said, 'Oh gees, I'm the oldest here... (Shirley, 515)

I felt a bit nervous because I was the youngest by about 8 years... (Mavis, 42)

Continuing with the course

One significant factor which causes problems for students in accessing vocational education and training is the distance required to *travel to the institution*. Costs associated with travel and a lack of public transport are described as major difficulties. Accommodation nearer to the institution is a solution for some, though this may be costly, as is the use of the telephone to stay in touch with family and friends. A sense of isolation can develop when students feel cut off from family and community.

Although I was a mature age student, all the other students, most younger, appeared to have so much more knowledge of experiences in Aboriginal ways and cultures. (Jill, 247)

There was some problems with attendance because I lived along way away. I had to catch trains, buses and a ferry. Now I wish I lived closer to the university. (Teresa, 556)

I have problems with my kids. They want me to throw it in. Once when Mum couldn't mind the kids, I was a week late going to residentials. (Kerry, 2)

It's not a challenge: it's a headache. (Clare, 118)

Too much too fast and too heavy for me and that's why I dropped out...it was just too hard for all of us Aboriginal girls (Sally, 489)

a lot of content very quickly, (Alice, 16) modules in 14 weeks (Dave, 184)

3 subjects in 2 nights a week...on top of a full-time job (Clare, 116)

When you finish (the block) you're just exhausted., It's just too hectic.. The blocks suit me but they're just too full on (Amy, 36)

we can give them a call at any time if we want to know things. (Mavis, 46) Again it depends on the individuals who are aware, sensitive to my needs. (Noni, 368)

It suits my style of learning and is just right for me...it's pretty well geared to my level. ...It is a very good working situation. (Ray, 399)

Three and a half days a week...suits me because it's not too pressured. We work at our own pace. It's very easy and like a refresher course. (Trevor, 539)

Full-time - three and a half days a week. Good learning way for me. A very suitable course for Aboriginal people starting off in education. Good to learn together and compete with each other. It draws on my past work. (Richard, 449)

Block release...very much to my style of learning...going back to study after 20 years and meeting other people (Stewart, 509)

A lot of pressure because the two weeks of lectures is equivalent to 7 weeks mainstream. (Nathan, 309)

A lot is covered very quickly, seem bombarded with it. (Paul, 338)

A lot covered quickly but it is explained in a way that we understand and therefore keep moving through the course...we always discuss work requirements and suggest other methods of doing things. (Mary, 289)

Residential courses for block release programs overcome this problem for many students who indicate that they could not have accessed vocational education and training without the block mode. However homesickness is a major negative factor for other students. Women with young families particularly experience child-care difficulties, and several students indicated that one reason they could do their course was that they do not have children, or that their children are grown.

Many speak of enjoying the challenge of their course, with the major problem frequently being time, a significant factor influencing their satisfaction with the course being studied. Both students studying part-time on campus and those attending in block mode complain that there is considerable stress created by too much content being covered too quickly, and this may be exacerbated by difficulties and delays in making appointments with lecturers, support tutors and by inflexible time schedules for assessment tasks. In one instance this caused a student to drop out.

On the other hand some students comment that they find the pace of the course suits them and their other commitments can be managed. In many cases the heavy work load seems to have been compensated for, if there have been opportunities to negotiate tasks and time frames, and by the understanding of some lecturers who give extra assistance if required.

Recognition of Aboriginality

Recognition of Aboriginality is a major factor leading to success in vocational education and training. As has been apparent in the preceding sections describing Aboriginal students' first experiences of vocational education and training, the importance of the recognition of their Aboriginality is reflected in matters of course content , attitudes of lecturing staff and assessment tasks.

Content and delivery

Courses based on Aboriginal issues, culture or history are generally found to be most suitable to Aboriginal students' needs. Courses in other areas which incorporate *Aboriginal perspectives* are also well-regarded. In contrast, students complain about course content which lacks an Aboriginal perspective, and often these courses also do not give consideration to Aboriginal family or community matters and are unsympathetic when flexibility is requested. Students comment that where a course involves an awareness of their learning needs that they feel most comfortable, and that lack of cultural understanding makes learning difficult.

Bringing in students' experiences as Aboriginal people is seen as a positive feature of a course. Students want to talk about the relevance of their own experience to the areas being studied. They particularly comment on the need to refer to their working experience and the relevance of the course to their current jobs. An indigenous perspective is possible in a course if students' past and present experiences are drawn on by lecturers.

In courses with set curriculum or modules for study, negotiation is less possible, but in more flexible courses students report that they can negotiate tasks and content in some instances, and this is to be more satisfactory, especially for mature age students who are concerned at the length of time since their last experience of education. Students appreciate it when their views are welcomed in class, and enjoy interactive sessions and group work.

The students interviewed demonstrate a considerable range of individual difference in how structured they like a course to be, and how open to self-pacing. Self-paced packages suit one student who can work at his own pace, while another

We're helping them to understand the needs of Aboriginal students with regards to things like attendance at funerals, and personal family business, which always comes first. (Kerry, 4)

The whole course was based on talking, reading and writing. The whole process is valid in the Aboriginal community. Aboriginal peoples history is an oral history. The elders would sit around and pass on the stories to the young. This is still the best way of teaching Aboriginal people today. It is the imagery and descriptive information presented by the teacher that paints the picture for the youth. The teachers provided by the unit are Aboriginal or have vast experience. (Terri, 568)

... everything was Aboriginal friendly ... how people talked, ... about social issues and the Aboriginal way of doing things...all was geared to cater for our way of learning...to help us overcome any difficulties we were having... (Steve, 526)

There's an Aboriginal perspective through this whole course. It addresses Aboriginal issues and needs by assisting us to be able to work with our community and write about that, and share our knowledge with our peers. The structure suits my needs as in academic and Koori. The blocks suit my work and the groups suit my culture. We feel comfortable with lecturers and coordinators. I know they would be understanding and help us to plan around our problems. (Billy, 83)

It made the course so much harder because cultural background wasn't taken into consideration. (Wilma, 619)

In the lectures we are able to talk about stuff that is specific to us and where we come from. (Christine, 151)

The teachers plan everything. I just go along with it, they didn't always listen to what we were saying, they thought they knew what was best. (Charlie, 126)

More explanation about what they want. More teaching in all the learning areas—like kinaesthetic, hearing and seeing. I need things explained in different ways. She thinks we should understand things that are simple, but when we've never done them before, we don't know what to do and we feel stupid—like we should know. (Tracey, 574)

They understand our way and not too rigid in rules. (Trevor, 536)

They do take it into consideration ... they provide child-care and take into account our problems at home. (Richard, 446)

I have had to absent myself on a couple of occasions due to family commitments and the course has been flexible enough for me to cope with this. (Jill, 248)

You get exemptions from classes for funerals, sickness and that. You just let them know the reason. (Bert, 93)

I have been rapped over the knuckles for missing lectures due to community involvement. (Ellen, 212)

I passed the course but I didn't feel like I passed it. I felt like they just gave me the certificate. (Charlie, 123)

It seemed to drag on forever. I took five years because I failed some when Dad died. There was a lot of demand on us. We had to learn a lot of new concepts. (Bob, 76)

In the second year I lost my aunty and mother in six months. (Christine, 159)

It allowed us to make our own decision concerning family matters, but we did have deadlines to reach associated with our studies. So if you get behind you have no choice but to get the work in on the due date. I think the workload was enormous and I truly believe this course should be extended to three years instead of two years, and you be allowed to defer subjects in tight situations, like family and personal matters. (May, 267)

student finds that working at her own pace means that she leaves things until the last minute and ends up feeling pressured.

Flexibility and lecturers' understanding of students' commitments to family and community are considered to be very positive factors in achieving successful vocational education and training outcomes. Where courses demand a set attendance (eg 80% ; 18) there needs to be flexibility in recognising that there are other significant demands on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's time. The issue of attendance is frequently mentioned by students: several comment that they had failed a part of a course because they had been absent on family business, whereas when these demands are taken into account and they are given flexible timelines for presenting assessments tasks, it becomes manageable. Sometimes material or tapes are posted to them, extra time is given and other students and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Unit usually assist them to catch up.

Students acknowledge that when they need time away to deal with family matters, they still should complete the work, and not be exempted from it. Even when workloads are described as heavy, students do not want to do less than required, but appreciate flexibility in negotiating assessment deadlines enabling them to meet both the demands of their family and community lives and the course requirements. This is seen to reflect the degree of cultural sensitivity of the institution or the lecturer. Where one student passed a course simply by making a commitment to be there, he felt patronised.

Students' perceptions of how 'Aboriginal friendly' a course and its lecturers are, is a highly significant factor in their sense of the course meeting their needs. Negative experiences in courses because of a lack of cultural understanding and of the Aboriginal perspective are described as unsettling and rigid, especially in regard to understanding the family commitments, or health problems that may prevent students' attendance. In some instances students can only get leave for matters concerning immediate family, or death. One of the worst examples of insensitivity was the lecturer's comment that 'The only excuse (for late work) I would accept is death'.

Staff attitudes

Having *Aboriginal lecturers* is a significant factor in students' satisfaction with a course, as students feel that there is more understanding of the importance of family matters. Where the lecturer is non-Aboriginal, students are satisfied if he/she shows cultural understanding and sensitivity, and is approachable. In these interviews most students indicate that staff were mainly accessible and supportive.
Criticisms of staff seem to centre on the attitudes of lecturers more than their knowledge or teaching skills. They are seen to be uninformed about Aboriginal issues and cultural diversity, even fearful of cultural differences. Staff may benefit from professional development programs on matters of cultural diversity. Another complaint is a lack of understanding of the different needs of Aboriginal students from country areas.

One student comments that cultural understanding and sensitivity are individual matters. Overall, where a course is conducted by Aboriginal lecturers or includes Aboriginal perspectives, students find it much more satisfactory.

Students' suggestions for the improvement of courses include having Aboriginal ex-students to come back and talk about their pathways and experiences, and having role models; having more one-to-one tuition; making support more accessible for students experiencing difficulties with travel and more assessments to indicate progress and more timetabling flexibility.

All of these comments highlight that indigenous students expect learning to be a two-way process. Students feel keenly that they have a lot to learn about 'mainstream' institutions and how they operate. At the same time, they expect, as mature age students in many cases, that their own cultural knowledge and experience will be drawn out in the teaching and learning process, and more significantly, that non-Aboriginal staff will also learn from this process about their culture and identity.

... depends on the lecturer and how much experience they have in working with Kooris. Aboriginal lecturers would be much preferred. (Nathan, 306)

They're specially picked. They've had experience with Aboriginal teaching before. They're real good - in every way. (Amy, 27)

Always an open door. (Sid, 499)

very supportive and take time to socialise with us (Colin, 164)

We have Aboriginal lecturers; for the non-Aboriginal lecturers, we've taught them. It's been a two-way learning. (Celia, 162)

They seem to have an affinity with our needs. (Billy, 86)

remote area students coming to study at the university have different ways to the urban students...(and) does not specifically deal with Aboriginal people trying to get used to the university lifestyle. (Ida, 228)

..the lecturers are afraid to seek out knowledge from the Aboriginal students for fear of what will emerge...(they) feel that Aborigines are too political... (Greg, 220)

mature age students have a collective of relevant life and professional experiences thereby intimidating lecturers. (Nathan, 306)

I think they tried to (understand) but I don't think they really knew how. They just tried to be friendly but I found this patronising. (Charlie, 123)

The staff are quite empathetic towards the students, as they do take an active interest in the trials and tribulations of student life. Teachers in this unit are friendly and supportive. (May, 270)

the older ones are set in their ways - won't budge a bit. Like if a couple of people are a minute late they're cranky with everyone. (Kerry, 7)

Older lecturers feel they have more status and they do not attempt to establish a rapport between the students and themselves. Give the impression 'I'm better than you. You are just a students, I'm a lecturer. (Ida, 231)

made me feel dumb; not enough personal contact, very much on your own. (Jenny, 241)

...because the whole course is run through the Aboriginal Unit, the lecturers are more flexible...it is building up my self-confidence and enabling me to do what I set out to achieve. (Mary, 286)

I'd like more flexibility to learn things I want to know. (Arthur, 66)

Assessment

I'm not sure how you fit a formal sort of course into a culturally appropriate way. (Charlie, 127)

Aboriginal related assessment tasks makes it easier to bring in your own thoughts and feelings.. it's not being thrown in the deep end - it's a good pace and things are explained - not like the mainstream class where lecturers talk 100 miles an hour and walk out and don't explain things. (Parry, 376)

(I) much prefer to work in a group for assessment. (Malcolm, 280)

...it's very vital to talk through our learning progress. (Roma, 450)

It does help when the lecturer/tutor explains what has gone wrong and what you have done right. It stops you from being alienated, as there is a balance of constructive criticism. (Jack, 262)

He makes sure I'm doing things in an academic way. I wouldn't want it any other way to how it's done now. (Christine, 155)

There's different ways of learning - we'd like more flexibility with subjects and lecturers - not just what's written in books, or what the lecturer wants - more personal ... they don't understand Aboriginal politics. What might work in their world doesn't work in our world... (Arthur, 65)

We all put in our own ideas to negotiate assessment, but all agreed on a particular project for assessment with a certain time-frame. (Debbie, 175)

maybe do away with exams, ... maybe expressing knowledge orally in a non-threatening environment. (Noeleine, 330)

Most course work is assessed through written assignments, and in some, oral presentations or observation of performance (eg teaching, music). Individual and group project work is popular with students, and negotiated contracts are found to be relevant.

All students express the need for feedback as soon as possible. In many cases this is provided and students felt that they learn a great deal from it.

Often students can ask lecturers or tutors to read drafts. Academic writing is a problem for many students, particularly in knowing how to start a task. Understanding the requirements of a written task also causes concern with a varying degree of assistance given prior in lectures in outlining the criteria. Students are critical of staff who are not clear in setting criteria, and slow in returning assignments, and one complained of tasks where all that seemed to be expected was a regurgitation of the criteria.

Inevitably the tension between meeting the demands of the course and the students' culture are raised, and if lecturers are prepared to negotiate time frames, students believe they can accomplish the tasks.

Many students would prefer less written and more oral and visual assessments (eg video, mapping), while some students find that oral presentations are daunting. This corresponds with what students have to say about speaking in classes, particularly where there are few or no other Aboriginal students. Exams are unpopular with some students who prefer an oral assessment. Students express satisfaction with courses where there is a variety of forms of assessment (essays, own choice projects, paired and group work, oral presentations).

Some students believe that their Aboriginality is taken into consideration in the assessment process where there is respect for their experience, and an understanding of their needs, such as being given extensions of time for family matters. Where students could negotiate their assessment tasks and are given choice, there is greater satisfaction. One student commented: 'I wanted to learn the white way' (Rita, 410) but most want, and in many cases already have, recognition of their Aboriginality, with assessment being more culturally appropriate.

The range of student responses regarding assessment indicates the importance of avoiding stereotypes and of staff and institutions having sensitivity to the needs of individual students.

More supervision at the workplace and my style of work and observing me work (Rex, 390)

Instead of written stuff I'd like more observation stuff. For lecturers to observe you in your work and see how you do things. (Kerry, 8)

In terms of learning styles, I feel I am better in a hands-on' situation. (Jack, 262)

I perform much better in my performance and so do better verbally than when I write (Paul, 339)

They should understand our community is different. When they watch you in oral presentations, we don't do to so good - but if they wasn't in there, I could talk all day - no problems. Maybe they could go out and we could show them a video - later. (Arthur, 67)

Many Kooris have problems in putting information into written form. The 'system' promotes one-upmanship' which is contrary to Aboriginal ways and patterns of thought. (Nathan, 310)

A lot of today's Aboriginal students are very competitive. I saw a girl cry because she wanted a distinction and she only got a credit. Me - I only want to pass and I'm happy, not beat people. (Bob, 77)

What they've got works - I'd rather do assignments than tests - you learn more, more time - and you go more into it. (Amy, 28)

lots of variety to cater for all our different learning styles. (Billy, 87)

you couldn't really have it any other way (Debbie, 175)

Support for the student

The interviews indicated that there were various types of support helpful to achieving positive outcomes. These include family and community support and varying forms of academic support, including tutoring.

My pathway has been a positive experience with the support from Aboriginal support structures ... It gave me the safe environment to operate from. (Paul, 341)

My family is the biggest support, also the Aboriginal Unit where we can go for help. (Malcom, 284)

Teachers and friends and family encouraged me when things got tough. (Jack, 265)

My mother is really proud of me.(Wally, 615)

It's split up my family ... It's meeting my needs but nobody else's. My family hates it. (Kerry, 4, 9)

the community calls me names 'coconut', 'high and mighty', to try to pull you down. (Betty, 58)

Very stressful, not much support from the family...I think I achieved something out of it, it wasn't all for nothing. (Sally, 491)

Eats into family time heaps. (Dave, 186) It's made me very unsure of myself and my abilities I don't see how this is relevant...if anything it's put me off further study for a while at least. (Clare, 118)

The Aboriginal Unit needs to have more support staff so that the Aboriginal Coordinator is able to do their job without being expected to be everything to everyone ... (There is) no one else to provide advice on other services available throughout the college. The expectation placed on the Aboriginal Coordinator is enormous. (Clare, 115)

The support of Aboriginal Units in tertiary education settings is crucial to Aboriginal students' access and retention. (Noeline, 332)

From the top down - an Aboriginal 'presence' - to make it more visually appealing through artefacts, paintings, murals around the campus. (Nathan, 308)

to help break down the barriers. At the moment, it is very much a 'them' and 'us' situation. (Malcolm, 278)

That's the hardest thing - fitting in. That's why a lot of my group left... (Bob, 75)

My family pull together and we so things at home. We've strengthened the family unit by all pitching in. (Tracey, 577)

Too much information to absorb especially when it is thrown at you quickly. Content, information tends to overwhelm me. (Peter, 349)

Family and community support

Most students indicate that they have strong personal support from the family and community, and that this is a very important factor in their achieving successful vocational education and training outcomes.

Where family and community support is lacking, students experience considerable tension and unhappiness. There is a need for a liaison person to inform families and communities of these possible tensions and of the vital importance of their support. Some institutions employ an Aboriginal counsellor who travels between the institution and the home and at an informal level helps the students to deal with these difficulties.

Where students do not find relevance in the course, it causes frustration and anger.

Given that family support is frequently stated as the main factor encouraging a student to stay in a course, some students have suggested that more facilities, such as child-care, would reduce these problems, as some institutions already provide. Aboriginal Units on the campus frequently support students through their difficulties. One student has indicated satisfaction with this support but comments that it does not extend beyond the campus when she is at home. Others comment on the heavy demands made of the Aboriginal Units on campus as students rely on the staff there.

Students consistently emphasise the importance of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Unit to their success Some mention the need for Aboriginal counsellors. Others describe the social benefits of having support groups on campus. The desire to feel that they belong on the campus is summed up by one student who sees a need for more Aboriginal representation in a physical sense.

Another student suggests more organised social activities between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students.

Academic support

It is also considered important to have access to academic support throughout the course. One student feels strongly

that a pre-tertiary course is essential for the majority of high school students, prior to entering university. Many students feel that they need further literacy assistance, especially with writing assignments.

Students usually arrange tutoring for themselves through the Aboriginal Tutorial Assistance Scheme (ATAS) provided by the Department of Education and Training (DEET), although sometimes an Aboriginal Unit or Coordinator makes the arrangement.

The majority of students report that they are provided with satisfactory support in their studies and that assistance with computer and library skills proves very useful, although it is essential that students be informed about available services early enough in their courses. One student comments that the ATAS matching process was 'a hit and miss affair'. (214) Study skills provision varies; either integrated into a course or additional to it, and one student comments that such courses should not be optional because '(I) would not discipline myself enough to attend'.

Frequently students report that lecturers are supportive of their learning and that peer tutoring or informal discussions with other students are very helpful. Most students prefer an Aboriginal tutor. However, a number of students' comments suggest there is not enough consideration given to class activities that consciously develop academic skills necessary for the subject.

I know I was capable of doing better, but didn't know how to... There was no orientation into the course. (Teresa, 562)

I found the course very difficult because in some ways I didn't really know what I was doing. The academic procedures were totally new to me I had to go over the instructions several times to ensure that I met their deadlines. I had not assistance at all, I didn't have nay contact. I didn't understand the new kinds of writing. (Wilma, 619)

Lectures were straight forward with nothing really to help us. It was take it or leave it and that was it. I knew what I was getting into but I'm to blame, I should have got a tutor or something like that. (Sally, 486)

You just have to let them know. (Mike, 14)

...when my grades started to slip out came the support.... (Col, 140)

...(we're) having workshops on, say, critical reading, essay writing...Our student support system is excellent... (Betty, 53)

Outcomes

Most students in this survey say they have been successful in achieving their goals, whether in terms of personal growth or vocational skills and knowledge. When students discuss the outcomes of their course, many speak in terms of personal enrichment and empowerment, their sense of enhanced self-worth, reflected in their family and community's perception of their success in their particular course. They believe that they now have greater confidence and esteem, and are learning more about themselves and society. Successful outcomes related to vocational skills have been achieved in the majority of cases, as well as skills related to other aspects of their life, like public speaking, letter writing, or improved proficiency in art and music.

I feel my personal needs are being addressed, that I will get a promotion or a better job, and that all the benefits I receive will flow on to and benefit my community. I hope to go on to further study, probably in specialised areas. I feel I'm growing towards that. (Billy, 88)

You find you are a person, not someone's wife or mother. You find yourself. (Betty, 58)

It's given me more confidence to go out and look for work again. (Col, 138)

It gives me more confidence in myself, talking, meeting, speaking out. (Sam, 471)

My family's more proud of me now and I'm proud of myself. I've done this for myself - not just stayed at the mission with everyone else. It's made me feel like a role model and I want the kids in the community to do something. (Amy, 38)

People give me more credit for my achievements- like they don't doubt my intelligence now. (Arthur, 68)

I am very political anyway, so I suppose I have become even stronger. (William, 599)

I feel better about myself. I've got more skills now. I use them at home ... things required in everyday living. It all fits in. Plus it'll help me to get a job in the future. (Tom, 587)

Ignorance is bliss , I don't have that excuse any more. (Raylene, 421)

This sure keeps my mind occupied. It's been good for my self-esteem too...So I'm gradually learning as I go and getting better. (Bert, 98)

I'm happier, more outgoing (Mike, 19)

It's made me start to plan to do something more in the future. I'm more motivated. (Amy, 29)

Feel like I can put something back into the community once I have finished the course. (Noni, 370)

There is an incentive there for you as a community person to help others. (Jack, 263)

A lot of stuff I put into practice at work. Like the knowledge I have on dysfunctional families. I've been able to help in the community in those situations. (Betty, 58)

(it) helped me see my life and my family's experiences and how they have been affected from a wider, regional, national and global perspective. (Nathan, 311)

mixing more within Aboriginal community, by attending Aboriginal functions. (Jill, 253)

I was affected as person because I felt I could do the course with assistance. As a family member it put a lot of

For many of students, a positive reaction from the community is highly significant. Furthermore, some have a sense that their studies have strengthened their Aboriginal identity. Many students believe that the skills and knowledge they have learnt will be directly useful in their communities, as in many cases the course is tied to their present job.

Others feel that they have learned about the culture of the university or college, and thus the course is seen as a stepping stone to the next. Some have specific goals and therefore courses in mind; others are less specific but are certainly prepared to consider further courses. Students' increased confidence and their perception of themselves as being successful are strong factors in their choosing the next step in their education or training pathway.

Occasionally students view the process critically, and express the need to 'play the game' in order to succeed. 'You learn to jump through the hoops, don't you?' (421)
'Where a student was unaided to complete her course, she felt very dissatisfied and disappointed.'

Most students are satisfied with their course, even if it is not their first choice. The few in this interview who expressed dissatisfaction with a course speak of its irrelevance, but these students either have decided to finish it anyway, or have moved to a more suitable course. One student who deferred his course believes he was not well prepared for it, coming straight from school, but believes that when he returns to his course after other experience, he will know what to expect.

The interviews suggest that students' negative experiences in vocational education and training centre around issues of their Aboriginality; that it is not taken into consideration in the initial procedures, content, delivery, staffing, support or assessment processes of a course. Lack of support from family and community is also identified as a most important obstacle to achieving positive outcomes. However, it may be a measure of their determination to reach their goals that most of the students in this survey describe successful outcomes, despite some or all of these negative factors.

Conclusion

In this section, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students were interviewed to determine their views on the factors affecting their success in vocational education and training.

These views have been reported to reflect their experiences at significant moments along their educational or training pathways; at the beginning of their course, during the course and on completion. The voices of the students interviewed clearly indicate the key factors for success, and their thoughts and feelings about their individual experiences.

From these interviews, the over-riding factor identified by students for achieving success is a recognition of their Aboriginality, at each stage of the educational process. Whether the student interviewed is male or female, from the city or country, entering vocational education and training straight from school or returning to education after many life experiences, their voices repeat the same theme: that it is of major significance to them to have their Aboriginality recognised.

pressures on my family and that is the why I dropped it, it affected my family too much because I used to put too much into it because I had not assistance. As a member of my community I feel that if I had been able to complete it I would have been able to help other Aboriginal organisations and maybe taught members or encouraged members to go out that way. (Wilma, 624)

(I) have gained strong links with (my) Aboriginal identity... and as an adult (I) feel I'm learning more than as a child, because (of) being treated with some respect. (Malcolm, 281)

...it's given me a very large extended family - all the other students and their families. (Bob, 78)

I'm now ready to go on and do something else, more study. (Parry, 383)

I went straight to the lecturer if I had any queries, I could play the game very well. (Ruth, 426)

It has given me a better understanding of how things are done. (Mary, 291)

I'm getting into a study pattern and an attendance pattern. I'm getting better at writing skills. Yes, I'm getting prepared for a bigger course. (Bert, 98)

The outcomes are in my head - old assignments - I'm using them at work all the time...the things I learn help me with my work and improve my career chances - the Land Council's happy with what I'm learning...This course is helping me - it's a stepping stone to a degree. (Arthur, 68)

Given the variety and severity of experiences it's a wonder I made it. My feelings of inadequacy, insecurity and the stress and anxiety associated with study and balancing working life are now justified and validated in my mind - considering my life experiences and the path my life has now taken. (Nathan, 312)

This recognition of Aboriginality may be realised in a course that is either specifically designed for Indigenous people or contains a significant component of Indigenous studies or perspectives. It also may mean that all or most students in that course are Indigenous people and that teaching staff are Indigenous or if not, are sensitive and aware of the needs of Indigenous students. A further signicant factor is that the mode of the course and the delivery of content should be culturally appropriate, recognising the needs of Aboriginal students. Students comment that assessments need to be negotiable and time schedules flexible to take account of family priorities. Recognition of their Aboriginality is realised when Aboriginal support is provided on-campus, and if possible, off-campus. Support from students' family and community is also emphasised as an important factor in their success.

It was reported that where some or all of these factors applied to a course that students experienced success and frequently were ready to take on further study. Students spoke of personal gains in esteem, knowledge and skills which in many cases qualified them for employment and advancement in their careers, and which they believed would be of benefit to their families and communities, where they were seen as role models. In contrast, where few or none of these factors applied, students were critical of the course and may have dropped out, or changed to a more appropriate course.

I have asthma but I'd crawl to get there. Carol (149)

Chapter 5
Providers and Their Experiences

This chapter examines factors affecting outcomes of participation in VET for indigenous Australians from the perspective of the providers of a range of courses for students from rural and remote, regional and city locations. Their views were obtained by telephone and personal interviews conducted across Australia by indigenous Australian researchers trained as part of the project. The interview sought information on the qualities of current provision, the difficulties that students face in accessing and participating in VET and the improvements necessary to make courses more accessible, relevant and appropriate to the needs of students and communities.

In this chapter the analysis of the data from the providers' interviews are documented in two sections:

- Factors which lead to positive outcomes
  This section describes a number of factors, from the providers' perspective, that contribute to effective VET provision for Aboriginal And Torres Strait Islander students.

- Factors which mitigate against success
  This section reveals the range of areas, from the providers' perspective, that need to be addressed in order to improve VET provision for Aboriginal And Torres Strait Islander students.

The respondents were all working directly with Aboriginal students in various positions in the institutions as Directors of Units (20%), Coordinators of programs (54%), teachers (10%) or support staff (28%). The majority (75%) were indigenous Australians, most of whom (85%) had worked in education for five or more years. A significant number (42%) of these people had worked in education for more than 10 years.

Those who were non Aboriginal (25% of all interviewed) had been working in education for more than 5 years with the majority (69%) in education for more than 10 years.

In the interviews providers were asked to give a brief history of the course in which they were involved. The histories indicated that a number of the programs (38%) had been in operation for ten to 25 years, some (a further 19%) had been in operation for 5-10 years, with a number (29 %) being set up over the last 5-6 years.

A significant number of the courses were set up in response to requests from communities or as a result of national reports (e.g. Royal Commission on Deaths in Custody, National Aboriginal Health Strategies, National Aboriginal Education Project [NAEP], 1980s). Other courses were

initiated by institutions themselves to address the difficulties that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students were experiencing or to provide better access and opportunity.

Factors which lead to positive outcomes

The interviews identified a number of key factors which have helped to improve the outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. All providers suggested that the most critical factor is the recognition of the student's Aboriginality throughout the educational process - through the establishment of Aboriginal Education Units, the development of networks with other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students; the employment of Aboriginal support people and Aboriginal teachers; the development of courses specifically for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and the implementation of a culturally inclusive pedagogy. Where some or all of these features were present, providers felt that students had more positive experiences of VET, less difficulties in negotiating institutional structures and procedures and better opportunities to work through any difficulties encountered in their VET programs.

Access, enrolment and orientation

We don't exclude any students. (If they are not suited to the course) we refer them on to something more suitable eg TAFE, a university preparation course or Aboriginal orientation course. (7)

We don't do testing at all. We give everybody the opportunity to education. (26)

It's about letting people do what they are undertaking to do. We look for a commitment. If the student is not suited to the course we may place them into a RAWFA(reading and writing for adults) class. (23)

Our entry requirements we get them to do a short piece of writing about their life experience. All students are interviewed and options are discussed.... We provide a tutor or refer them to another course if skills are lacking. (32)

We get them to put something in writing plus an interview, about a half hour or more. We don't send them away. We network and find other options to take them into the program. (12)

Access, enrolment and induction of Aboriginal And Torres Strait Islander students into VET courses is greatly assisted by flexible entry requirements, culturally sensitive processes, environments and Aboriginal support systems.

Providers suggested that flexible entry requirements were more effective in *providing access* for Aboriginal And Torres Strait Islander students many of whom are mature age. Some providers used open entry arrangements with some form of counselling or interview to identify students appropriate to a course. Those students found not to be suited to the course were not rejected but given assistance to find another course more appropriate to their needs thereby facilitating access and retention.

> Our entry requirements include interview sessions and an information day. We are it for all people. (28)

Where providers suggested that some forms of entry tests were appropriate, flexibility was achieved through placing the emphasis on an interview to complement other tests used. The interview served to counter any problems associated with testing as a way of checking on a student's suitability for the course. Providers suggested the tests themselves should include Aboriginal content and ways of

doing things. One provider said:

> Our entry requirements are culturally appropriate. The selection tasks are designed to identify if the student has potential. We ask them to do a comprehension test, essay, interview and a numeracy test. If they are not suitable we suggest TAFE eg CABE courses before reapplying. (29)

We designed our entry tests on numeracy and literacy but a lot of emphasis is put on an interview. We are looking for commitment and Aboriginal ways. The process is very informal. (25)

A number of providers suggested that another purpose of the interview was to test the student's commitment to study. Quite a strong theme appearing was that 'attitude and commitment' had to be assessed through an interview (14, 19) and taken into account with academic results, literacy levels and life pressures.(15, 24)

Our entry requirements are a two way choice of negotiation and what students want to do. We look for commitment and reasonable understanding of what's going on. (4)

In our entry requirements we have a little test - literacy, writing. We look mainly at the student's motivation and personal commitments. (24)

Flexible entry requirements are important to successful outcomes. They can be achieved in a number of ways through open entry with counselling, through culturally appropriate tests and interviews and flexible attitudes to work experiences. Providers identify the importance of the interview to complement other strategies. The interview is considered to be a culturally relevant strategy, a way of further checking out a student's educational needs and a way of assisting students to find the most appropriate course. It is also a way of checking commitment to study, another important factor relating to successful VET outcomes. Providers however do not make suggestions for how this is best done.

Where entry requirements were dependent upon students having access to work experience providers suggested that flexibility could be achieved by allowing students to have either paid or volunteer work experiences.

Students have to be working within a school context (to get into the course). They have to have voluntary or paid employment. If they don't have a place in school they are advised to work voluntarily. We provide one to one tutoring for 2 weeks before program admittance. (33)

Aboriginal staff, support systems and centres were considered critical to successful *enrolment and entry* into VET. Institutional structures, environments and procedures were shown to have a negative effect on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and these support systems ensured that students were not alienated by institutional processes. Aboriginal staff provided advice and counselling on courses, dealt with personal difficulties experienced in locating to the institution, assisted with complex enrolment procedures, and oriented students to the institution. Cultural liaison officers assisted students with accommodation, transport and in getting financial support (Abstudy). An Aboriginal Centre, where students could gather, access equipment and network with other Aboriginal students was identified by providers as important to making students feel that the institution was for them as well as for non-Aboriginal students.

Students find time to complete forms and pay fees difficult. The University and the Aboriginal Support Unit assist the students with these (34)

We have provided a Koori hostel, Koori teachers and staff and a pre-orientation program. We use Koori approaches (32)

We have our own guidance and welfare officers to assist with enrolment (43)

The Koori Centre provides support, guides students as to procedures; walks the student through the University (33)

We provide personal contact - one to one (7)

To support students we provide counselling and personal support. (8)

We have very supportive staff plus Aboriginal Support Officer plus the moral support within the program (12)

From the top down - an Aboriginal 'presence' - to make it more visually appealing through artefacts, paintings, murals around the campus. Nathan (308)

Our strategy is.....make the environment their own centre. Make it Aboriginal friendly. Provide Aboriginal awareness programs (23)

We make introduction into Uni very gentle, students need support (1)

We visit departments with students, plus provide facilities (4)

During orientation week there are 2 full time student support officers on campus (41)

We provide a good orientation. We have our own facilities, a common room and peer support. (25)

Our study skills area guides students by explaining rights, giving directions, providing contacts (29).

As part of acknowledging that the institution is for indigenous Australian students, providers identified the need to be more sensitive to the way the environment and culture of institutions affects the students. As suggested in the chapter on learner experiences, institutions need to provide an environment in which Aboriginal culture and artefacts are more prominent. This can help students feel that the institution is there for them.

To assist students to adapt to learning within the institution and to ensure students were made aware of institutional procedures and structures, providers identified the need for an orientation program. The orientation program should clearly identify and differentiate current ways of learning from those students may have had in the past, explain appropriate ways of negotiating institutional procedures, provide information on support systems available and how to access these.

In summary, providers have identified the need for flexible entry requirements which include interviewing, counselling and referral to ensure successful access. To ensure that students are painlessly enrolled, there is a need for a number of Aboriginal support systems which include Aboriginal personnel and an affirming Aboriginal environment. Successful entry to courses is best achieved through effective orientation programs which address different student needs for assurance that the educational experience will be different to negative experiences of the past and the course will provide effective academic skills and culturally sensitive experiences.

Course design, delivery and assessment

Cultural aspects of course design, delivery and assessment were considered by providers to be critical to successful VET outcomes. The following comment highlights how one provider has implemented a range of culturally appropriate structures which assist positive VET outcomes for students:

> We have Aboriginal staff to teach on the program. All the materials have an Aboriginal slant to them. All assignments and study skills (activities) are on the Aboriginal community, journal (personal) and (Aboriginal And Torres Strait Islander) history. Students and community members are used as role models. The course is evaluated by the Aboriginal Education Committee. We have an Aboriginal Vice Chancellor Advisory committee, an Aboriginal University Advisory committee, a Monitoring and Advisory committee (which have representatives from) DEET, ATAS, National Parks and health workers and community members. (31)

Design of courses

Providers clearly identified that the involvement of the community was critical to the design of relevant and effective courses.

> It should involve consultation with the community so that an appropriate philosophical approach is taken... get and involve Aboriginal people at all levels. (15)

(We have) consultation with the Aboriginal Advisory Council; Aboriginal Educational Council.... as much Aboriginal involvement as possible. (13)

Whilst most providers reported that there was some form of community involvement in course design, the type and amount of involvement differed. For example community involvement in some settings referred only to consultations with Aboriginal staff and students within a course. In other settings involvement included staff and students as well as Aboriginal liaison people, community elders and Aboriginal organisations represented on an Aboriginal Advisory Board. Broader representation was seen as more desirable by many providers who suggested that this reflected the diverse needs of Aboriginal And Torres Strait Islander students and cultures.

In the past we had none (community involvement) but the curriculum is now being rewritten by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and a community steering committee. (42)

The package is changed regularly by staff and students. We have student meetings and Aboriginal Educational Consultative Group input. (7)

The course is developed on the ground through elders and students. We are very careful about who we select to go out to the communities. (7)

The provider comments are indicative of the type and extent of community representations on course development and advisory committees. As one provider implied, there has been a development of their processes of consultation increasing the number of sources of information.

We have an advisory group. It is hard to get a representative group and so we really network with all Aboriginal groups involved in education. We always use appropriate Aboriginal people (to liaise). (12)

Originally a task force was set up and sent out to the community. We now have a twelve member advisory committee which meets twice a year. We include the Aboriginal Educational Consultative Group to discuss, assess, put forward changes. We get input from Aboriginal students via evaluations sheets. (35)

Community involvement was seen to be an important step in facilitating the inclusion of culturally relevant content and pedagogy.

Regarding cultural identity, many providers identified the need to reinforce Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students' pride in their own cultures. Some suggested that this should be done through Aboriginal Studies subjects. One stated that:

> Aboriginal Cultures are very diversified therefore the program should meet the lived experience of Aboriginal people so that the different backgrounds are taken into account and respected, eg Bob from outback, Sally for the city. (34)

Inclide Aboriginal studies so the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander can learn about their own cultures. Include both traditional and contemporary studies (Freedom ride and black deaths). (35)

Involve an Aboriginal perspective in course curriculum, eg read an article with an Aboriginal flavour and make learning an interactive process - students sharing their experiences. (29)

Cultural content has to be related to the area (of study). (21)

Offer things that are of interest to them (the students); have student input, Aboriginal involvement...be Aboriginal focussed (9)

One of the main considerations in designing a program is to make the delivery system flexible. You need more face to face and personal contact (in this distance education program). You need more block release and mixed mode within the delivery. (17)

It is important to take the program into the community. (33)

Deliver training in the community. (3)

To make the courses more effective we would be looking at course flexibility; evening/ day programming, and extension of the vartia campus program, ie pre planned sessions, offering of more block type release. Offering a broad range of units. Establish centres in the suburbs. (5)

One of the changes we want is to offer the course in different modes. (4)

We need to provide more flexibility in delivering courses and include multiple exits and entry points. (11)

We require more opportunity for block release and more training in the community. (18)

The changes we suggest include more flexible delivery, taking the course to the community. Flexible processes, making the course into shorter chunks of information to allow students to complete only what is necessary for them before moving onto other courses or deciding it's not for them. (34)

Others suggested that such studies could be included as part of other subjects by building learning activities around Aboriginal history and culture, drawing on and valuing students own experiences and using role models from the community. Some providers referred to the desirability of marrying Aboriginal and mainstream cultures without changing the student, as well as giving students the chance to explore their own culture through the curriculum. (30)

Course delivery

Providers identified a number of course delivery factors which contributed to successful VET outcomes. These included a variety of modes of delivery to cater for the differing requirements of students, flexible course structures which accommodate the competing demands on students, use of support systems, a variety of interactive teaching and learning strategies which emphasise collaborative and group learning, experiential activities and activities which integrate theory and practice.

A variety of delivery modes were being used in the VET provision. These included weekly attendance, block modes (where students attended an institution for intensive course work accompanied by continued studies at home) open learning and distance modes with packaged learning materials, and combinations of these.

Some of these delivery modes have evolved to meet the needs of the indigenous Australian students accessing the programs and are seen as effective ways of delivering courses. For example in some cases block attendance has replaced weekly attendance because it assists students to manage the competing demands of family, community and employment.

Providers also emphasised the need to deliver courses in the community, and though not used often it was valued and seen as a goal to aim for.

Where courses catered for students from regional and remote areas, the most usual modes were the block, open learning and distance modes. In these courses a block mode of delivery was most valued because it gave students easier access to effective support systems and a better range of services.

To make this mode of delivery most successful providers suggested that it required an Aboriginal welfare officer to visit students when they were away from the institution to provide active support and keep students in contact with the course.

Flexibility was identified as another critical factor in effective course design and delivery. Providers suggested that flexible course structures and delivery systems are needed to cater for the difficulties that students face due to competing personal and course commitments. These difficulties led to student absence from courses and meeting course deadlines impossible. In these circumstances providers suggested that course deadlines and attendance requirements should be flexible to assist students to complete courses. Moreover students should be able to negotiate extensions without complex procedures.

> You need to take into account the social and economic conditions of students and that students' personal lives take over from their student lives. (You need flexible course attendance). (28)

To complement flexibility in course structures providers suggested that effective delivery systems include support strategies for students. These should include counselling using culturally appropriate strategies, phone contact and home visits with students. Providers emphasised the need to preserve the privacy of the student by allowing the student to share information with one person who then advocates that extensions be given without sharing the personal details of the student.

Some factors associated with effective teaching and learning were considered critical to successful VET delivery systems. Learning was found to be more effective when parts of the curriculum were negotiated, when experiential learning activities, group work and collaborative learning were used; when theory and practice were integrated and learning was an interactive process between staff and students. One provider recommended:

Allowances are always made for family/ personal commitments, eg food, travel etc. We show flexibility and give extensions, encouraging the students until the final date (35)

We give them time to get things done. Family matters are taken into consideration (21)

We give extensions via negotiations with the student and the Aboriginal Program Unit Staff (37)

Student difficulties are not an issue with our college and we make home visits when students are away for a couple of days or more(10)

We negotiate extensions - sometimes students may be able to do work at home. We also insure that students are aware of their responsibilities so they are not set up to fail. We try to address the underlying issues. (29)

We provide individual counselling to identify the problem and have our own support and communication systems. (11)

We understand and use Aboriginal ways of counselling... individual interviews. (25)

We provide lots of phone contact to support students... tutors make trips into the field (to see students). (17)

We work through our Aboriginal Study skills officer. No questions are asked as long as we know. (28)

Use collaborative ways of learning. Discuss the task as a group, sharing writing, providing ideas for a communal response... The teacher becomes an adviser/facilitator by starting from where the students are. Ownership is not an issue, everyone gives and take ideas. (34)

Provide interaction and discussion; open thoughts rather than lectures. Make sure that the class environment is comfortable by changing the seating

to encourage sharing. Allow students to present information tc the rest of the class rather than the lecturer presenting all the information. (29)

Provide group discussion and allow sharing of information. Choose activities which deal with the student's reality linking theory and practical. (3)

Use study skills booklets. Use a lot of talking rather than reams of notes, eg give the students a handout, discuss it, get them to read it that night and then discuss it again the next day. include 'hands-on' activities - doing actual things. eg write a couple of pages of a journal rather than talk about how to write it. Don't make the learning too formal. Provide frequent breaks. The students lack experience with formal education. (31)

Provide hands-on, practical experience. Assessments should be experiential and make use of an action learning approach, by trial and error. (11)... Vocational Preparation Course

Give an assignment, eg an essay on health. Discuss the assignment - how to approach research, how to evaluate. Provide study skills and use questioning to extend thinking. (34)... Aboriginal Education course

Use group discussion. Share information on work experience. Deal with student reality, link the theory to the practice. (3)...Community Health degree.

Providers suggested that there are some differences in the strategies to be used when specific types of courses are considered. Courses which extended academic skills, or oriented students to further study, were more successful when learning was interactive, practical, informal, closely linked to assessment tasks and taught students how to learn. In vocational courses providers suggested the need to place more emphasis on providing experiences closely related to students' work contexts.

The classroom environment should empower students, support students and encourage students. (7)

You need to be flexible. Accepting situations, eg children in classroom with parents. (30)

I think that we should have some sort of centre, so we can say this is our own to have. Ideally all staff should be Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders. (41)

A classroom environment within a 'cultural space' that is clearly identified, as well as high quality, culturally appropriate resources are important to successful course delivery.

It should have the right teachers who are experienced with working with our people. We need good, culturally appropriate resources - materials, equipment, space / buildings. (24)

Qualities of teachers

Being an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person. Having a great deal of experience. Understanding the social, historical and economic background of Aboriginal peoples. Having the ability to empower Aboriginals. (3)

Personal relationships, flexibility and trust. Aboriginal students relate to the person rather than the program. Having good listening skills. The giving and receiving of time. (11)

The choice of appropriate teachers is critical to successful delivery of courses. Providers were asked about the qualities of teachers who work successfully with indigenous Australian students. They included being supportive, flexible, non judgemental, open to learning from students, having a sense of humour, being patient, accepting of cultural diversity, respectful and empathetic. They must be qualified and know their subjects, be able to put their subject across in a variety of ways, be knowledgeable about the social, historical and economic backgrounds of

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, committed to equity and have good teaching skills.

> Sensitive to Aboriginal people. Perceptive of the diversity of Aboriginal peoples, ie seeing people as individuals. They should be teachers who ensure that students are not put in an alienated position; ensure the cohesiveness of the group. Be qualified and know their material. (29)

Again, these qualities are combined with an ability to teach from different perspectives in a cross-cultural way.

The provider comments highlight the high expectations that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have of their teachers, regardless of cultural background. The importance of personal qualities indicates that institutions need to carefully select staff to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and to provide a range of strategies for ensuring that staff work effectively. These include giving preference to the recruitment of Aboriginal staff, providing cross cultural training and cultural awareness workshops, having non Aboriginal staff work directly with Aboriginal staff, monitoring teaching by sitting in on classes, and having strict recruitment criteria.

The policy of giving preference to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff when recruiting is seen by providers as the most effective measure in ensuring that staff can work effectively with students.

Down to earth. Accept each student's values on an individual level. Attitude - willing to learn from students. Aware of the needs of Aboriginal rights, culture related to access and equity. Be approachable and willing to listen. (33)

Understanding of Aboriginal culture. Worked with Aboriginal people. Have some empathy for our people. Be a lecturer and a friend. (20)

Professional development for all staff which includes cultural awareness and equal opportunity and social justice issues. (11)

Down to earth. Very personable. explain things easily and diagrammatically to move the student up to the words. Get to know the students as people. Have knowledge of the area. Someone who can teach the process and have the flexibility to cover content from different perspectives. (34)

All non-Aboriginal staff work with an Aboriginal staff member. They are given a formal induction which includes cross cultural training. (3)

All staff have to do Aboriginal studies 111, plus do professional development. (25)

During recruitment we look at subject expertise, knowledge, Aboriginal education and experience. The Aboriginal Educational Consultative Group sits on the (recruitment) panel. Our policy is to completely staff with Aboriginal teachers if they possess the qualifications. (33)

In summary providers identified a number of key factors affecting outcomes in the design, delivery and assessment of courses. Most of these related to cultural aspects of the provision and included:

- community involvement in course design
- culturally relevant content allowing for inclusion of student experiences
- use of flexible course structures to take account of the competing demands on students,
- use of a range of learner-centred teaching strategies compatible with the diverse needs of the students
- design of culturally and vocationally relevant assessments tasks
- use of a variety of assessment tasks including oral presentations, group assignments and projects, negotiated learning activities, laboratory and field work,
- adoption of flexible modes of delivery.

  and
- employment of Aboriginal staff, or the careful selection, specific induction and training of non Aboriginal staff

We make use of all the strategies listed, providing variety for each person and to highlight what they are good at and what they need to work more on. They then can be given appropriate support on an individual level to reach academic standards (in all). (30)

We use all the strategies listed. Without these skills they won't succeed in the University environment. These skills are fundamental to the whole learning process. (29)

We used all the strategies listed (above). This gives the student the opportunity to demonstrate knowledge, skills, competencies in a manner familiar to them. Their use is within TAFE guidelines. (11)

We use all (the above) assessment strategies but negotiated learning contracts. The variety of methods are used to give students and even chance in presenting their knowledge in the best possible way. (33)

It is a bridging course that is culturally designed and all assessments meet the needs of mainstream in preparing them for future study. (25)

The aim of using all these assessment strategies is to simulate mainstream Uni experiences so that students can make informed decisions about the ability needed to do Uni. Teachers advise where the students are up to. (34)

In the interview providers identified a number of factors associated with developing assessment activities which contributed to successful VET outcomes. They identified several assessment strategies which could be used but strongly suggested the importance of using a variety of assessment strategies in order for students to develop skill in being assessed, and to cater for individual differences in learning styles.

However providers did suggest that some strategies were more culturally appropriate than others and made use of these strategies more often.

Underpinning the assessment process and critical to its effectiveness was the use of assessment activities which explored Aboriginal culture and identity.

Some questions in the interview asked providers to identify the range of assessment strategies being used and the reasons for their use. The majority of providers made use of various combinations of the following:

- spoken and oral presentations,
- group assignments and projects,
- laboratory and field work,
- set assignments and essays,
- written exams at the end of the term, semester or year, and
- negotiated learning contracts.

A significant number of providers made use of all, or most, of these assessment strategies. In doing so they emphasised the importance of providing students with opportunities to practice and develop skill in assessment activities likely to be encountered in future courses and workplaces. At the same time they identified the need to cater for differences in learning styles. Providers considered these critical to successful VET outcomes.

With the CAFE program everything is negotiated and how students want to be assessed is the way teachers go. (19)

In some instances where multiple assessment strategies were used students could negotiate the ways that they would be assessed in order to maximise their success in the course.

> The key thing is that these assessments are negotiable, and they are relevant to the module we are doing. (23)

Relatively few providers made use of only one or two assessment strategies. Those who did usually made use of more traditional form of assessment like set assignments, essays or exams. They justified their use in similar ways to those who made use of a variety of strategies, that of preparing students for further study.

We use set assignments and essays to match up with the programs offered; and to develop students skills. (16)

We use set assignments, essays and exams because it is an academic requirement. This gives students experience with Uni course assessment methods. Students keep a journal, write an oral history research report, do an essay to assess if the student can attain tertiary writing standard. (31)

As well as providing a range of strategies providers identified particular approaches as relevant and culturally sensitive. These included:

- oral presentations to balance the more traditional essays and assignments,
- group assignments and projects,
- negotiated learning and
- practical activities which mirrored real activities that students would encounter.

The support that students get from group work (and oral presentations) is culturally more acceptable. (10)

We use group assignments and projects and oral presentations. Spoken and oral is our way. (24)

We make use of spoken and oral presentations because they are non-threatening, non judgemental, culturally appropriate. (27)

A range of assessment methods was seen as developing both application to work contexts and, importantly, developing and enhancing the student's own cultural awareness:

> The use of group projects, spoken and oral presentations, negotiated learning contracts and set assignments and essays ensure students can put the work into practice, eg write submissions, be culturally aware. It is a holistic approach that is appropriate. (32)

Making use of spoken and oral presentations, negotiated learning contracts, set assignments and essays and field work, address the needs of our culture and the needs of individuals. In this way we maintain attendance. (34)

I encourage (the inclusion of Aboriginal culture and identity) for the subjects they are doing. I like to relate it to their culture, background and make it relevant. (26)

The issue of providing assessment activities which made use of Aboriginal experiences and cultures was explored. With few exceptions providers indicated that this was being done and that it was important to ensure that learning was relevant and would produce strong cultural outcomes. A non Aboriginal person noted that context was taught in relation to culture and identity, as a guiding principle.

Aboriginal culture and identity is very much incorporated into this course. (7)

Yes we do include Aboriginal culture and identity. Our programs are designed for Aboriginal people. we take issues from the community and relate it to the course. (8)

Yes we have an Aboriginal Culture and History class. We discuss shared experiences, learn from one another, learn commonality as well as an individual; eg someone may play the didgeridoo while someone else presents a piece of work orally. (29)

Yes, most assignments relate to individual students own experiences especially in the beginning. We then move students to back up their own views/ experiences from texts. (30)

In summary providers identify a number of features important to achieving successful VET outcomes for Aboriginal And Torres Strait Islander students. These include:

- inclusion of Aboriginal content in assessments which include Aboriginal experiences and aspects of culture and identity;
- use of culturally relevant assessment tasks;
- some negotiation of assessments tasks to meet specific needs of Aboriginal And Torres Strait Islander students
- some choice over types of assessment tasks to maximise students opportunities to be successful by catering to individual differences
- use of a range of assessment tasks to develop skills in doing assessments tasks students are likely to encounter in future courses or workplaces

Outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander courses

Providers were asked to identify effective VET outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and consider factors related to them.

In the provision of VET two main types of courses were identified. Those which involved educational outcomes such as in tertiary preparation, literacy and numeracy courses or Aboriginal studies courses. Such courses aimed at improving academic and educational skills in preparation for further education. Other courses had a strong vocational focus directly providing employment skills such as in rural Aboriginal programs or in courses for community health care workers; community management and development courses; health science courses, horticulture courses; small business skills courses; courses on opportunities for women in the Public Sector.

When asked about the main outcomes of courses providers generally emphasised personal and cultural outcomes over the vocational and educational outcomes regardless of the type of course. It appears that providers see vocational and educational courses as an opportunity not only to gain education and employment skills but to improve self esteem, confidence, increase knowledge and pride in being Aboriginal and increase understanding of culturally appropriate ways of working both within Aboriginal communities and within non Aboriginal settings.

Provision within an essentially vocational education program included cultural outcomes.

One cultural goal which was identified by providers, and supported by learners themselves, was the goal of "becoming an good role model for the children and others in the community" (9). The statement of this goal mirrors not only one kind of cultural goal but the value given to education as a way of assisting change. This valuing of education was mirrored in the number of courses which were generated from community initiatives.

Other providers of vocational programs suggested that the main outcomes were related to personal growth, or they gave equal weight to personal outcomes and vocational ones.

The emphasis on several educational outcomes is not surprising given the numbers of students in basic or preparatory courses and the importance attached to language and literacy issues (Chapter Six). But outcomes such as confidence and skill development are linked to employment outcomes:

> The main outcomes are to obtain work, to see the development of the students and their increased confidence..... I see student personal and vocational goals as equal. (8)

These themes were mirrored in courses which were designed to provide educational outcomes.

It was notable that all of the courses with a main focus on preparation for further education emphasised personal skills in preference to the educational skills. It may be that the other educational outcomes were presumed to be

"managing in culturally appropriate ways. Operate on community principles, articulate an Aboriginal World view on a particular issue; provide personal development skills".(1)

Makes valid our (Aboriginal) learning. (16)

The main outcomes include to make them proud to be Aboriginal; we have our say now. (24)

The main outcomes include communications skills, management skills, finance, confidence and self esteem. (22)

The main outcomes lifted their self esteem, gave the students confidence, made them proud to be Aboriginal. We have our say now. (24)

In our courses the students get additional skills. Confidence is boosted(self esteem). Quality of life improves. (26)

The main outcomes are confidence, to achieve skills which will allow successful entry into University without and TER or HSC score. The skills are developed in two areas - social, how to go about something and academic what is required formally. (31)

The main outcomes relate to teaching in schools and community skills. Students are able to analyse, research (how to find information, ask questions). Develop confidence and take positions as professionals, as an Aboriginal person. (34)

The main outcomes are self development, confidence, to gain learning and gain employment. (28)

The main outcomes are self confidence, self esteem, to develop literacy and numeracy and gain employment. (7)

The students require a range of skills to attend university. Confidence and self esteem. (4)

The main outcomes have given each student a sense of achievement - "I've done it and it opens other doors. (21)

Students believe in themselves, their self esteem is raised (I can do that). They have the skills to back up above. they learnt more about Aboriginality, about their own identity. The had more political and community awareness. (32)

This course prepares them for mainstream. They have empowerment and self esteem. There is total student achievement. (25)

We have an emergent curriculum therefore students hopefully become able to work on a personal and Communal level. There is a student preparedness to improve by knowing their own strengths and weaknesses. (34)

The main outcome is to understand what it takes to gain employment and to understand the facets of education. (6)

evident from the name of the courses. However the fact that the majority of providers chose to mention these personal skills often and usually ahead of mentioning other outcomes, does appear to indicate both the need for and the importance of these outcomes within Aboriginal education.

Other personal and cultural goals mentioned less often included achieving empowerment, increased understanding of personal identity, greater political, community and historical awareness and ability to use effective strategies to achieve goals.

Another theme of the discussions of outcomes of the courses was the holistic nature of the courses, which strove to meet the twin requirements of educational/ vocational goals and personal/cultural goals.

In summary providers suggest that factors that lead to effective educational outcomes include having specific courses for Aboriginal And Torres Strait Islander students which allow providers to concentrate upon appropriate personal, cultural and strategy outcomes while they provide vocational and educational skills. The culturally sensitive nature of the courses specifically designed for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students makes the learning experiences themselves less alienating and more supportive than in courses in which Aboriginal students are the minority. These cultural and personal goals should be met regardless of whether the course is focussed upon achieving educational goals or vocational ones.

Promoting the course

We advertise by sending out newsletters, going door to door. We have a package on the course...the students recruit themselves through word of mouth. (6)

Students find out about our course by word of mouth. We visit Aboriginal community organisations at their monthly contact meetings. We distribute printed information and rely on the Nunga grapevine. (8)

We visit all Aboriginal community centres; Aboriginal radio. We go to the CES. (10)

A number of successful strategies for promoting courses were described in the provider interviews. The most effective strategy appeared to be "word of mouth". If a course was providing appropriate experiences and was meeting the varied learning needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students this information was shared with others. This was found to attract other people to the course. Some of the providers made structured use of this strategy by asking successful graduates to visit and share their experiences with potential students in schools, communities and Aboriginal organisations.

Providers however did not rely on a single strategy. They used a range of strategies. These included course information booklets or packages, advertisements in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander newspapers, radio and TV advertisements, Aboriginal liaison officers who maintained regular contact with communities and made home visits, recruitment drives, career forums, direct mail outs, contact through local Aboriginal Associations and Land Councils. All of these strategies appeared to have some success in attracting students.

We provide posters and advertise through the Koori mail. We have a promotional video; we go through Aboriginal Media Assn; we have a liaison officer who does PR in schools and communities. (22)

In summary the effective promotion strategies use Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander networks and systems. They include direct contact with the students they wish to attract and are designed to allow students to make informed judgements about the relevance and appropriateness of the courses. It is significant that successful promotion is dependent upon the course itself having a reputation for being culturally and vocationally relevant to the education and training needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. From discussion earlier in the section the implication is that providers need to make effective use of the Aboriginal community in the design and evaluation of courses to ensure that the courses are effective in achieving relevant outcomes. Use can then be made of the reputation and standing of the course within the Aboriginal community as well as of successful graduates to attract other students.

Factors which mitigate against success

This section describes providers perspectives of a range of issues and concerns that need to be addressed in order to improve VET provision.

Whilst the emphasis in this section is on the difficulties faced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students it is important to remind the reader that many positive experiences of VET have been identified in the chapter on learner experiences and in the first section of this chapter.

Providers identify a number of institutional, educational, and personal factors which make the students passage into and through VET more difficult. All of these have a cultural basis, with respect to the culture of the institution and its relationship to the cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Institutional factors relate to the institution's structures and systems that frame up the provision. Educational factors encompass those which relate to the ways that courses are designed, structured and delivered. Personal factors relate to factors associated with the students themselves, their needs and responsibilities as individuals, family and Community members.

Providers suggest that institutional and educational factors appear to be the source of greater difficulty when students enter courses. However as students progress through the courses personal factors, as they interact with educational factors, are more critical in influencing student success.

Issues and concerns related to access

Institutional factors

Indigenous Australian students accessing VET experience a number of entry and orientation difficulties attributed to institutional factors. Larger institutions particularly are seen as intimidating and alienating, their bureaucratic procedures complex, the buildings and physical environment large and difficult to negotiate and the course enrolment procedures off putting.

The students find the University environment unfamiliar and they experience difficulties in learning the University culture (2)

Students are intimidated by the size of the place. They feel they shouldn't be here. They are in the minority. They have no understanding of the application and enrolment procedures and the paper work is unfamiliar. (35)

The students find the process of working in an academic environment alienating (16)

There are too many bureaucratic procedures (13)

It is a big cultural shock for a lot of our students but we give a two week orientation which is very beneficial (22).

In addition students are often made aware of being in the minority and experience forms of culture shock. One provider suggested that many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students believed that " TAFE was for white fellas" (24).

To counter the negative influences of institutional factors a number of providers have introduced procedures to support students. Aboriginal support staff and Aboriginal Education units have been set up. They provide orientation to the institution and to study activities and assist the student in building networks and gaining peer support. Others provide counselling and advice on the general support services available within the institution.

Educational factors

A number of educational factors cause difficulties for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Many students are mature age, a number of whom left the education system early because of unsatisfactory and negative experiences (see chapter on learners and their experiences). They return to education with a wealth of life and work experiences but apprehensive about returning to educational institutions which are unfamiliar or likely to repeat the negative experiences of the past.

the lack of familiarity with the institution and learning the Uni culture; time management; study skills; coping with bad teaching (2)

getting back into a routine of time and study and focusing on task (21)

keeping on task and making a firm commitment due to lack of confidence and lack of the view that learning continues after school

the unfamiliarity of the language(17)

academic language - writing in the form required by the University (29)

the fact that it is going to be a school room situation (26)

Many students attend foundation education courses as a way of re-entering education and others access directly the vocational courses most relevant to their vocational needs and goals. For a number of these students' academic writing and study skills can cause difficulties for them and mitigate against success. For others it is the lack of familiarity with institutional learning and worries about their ability to refocus on learning and its routines.

To deal with some of the educational difficulties of students, and increase success, providers have introduced orientation programs which address the issue of learning within the institution emphasising the differences between current learning and the alienating learning of the past.

limited prior education...literacy is an issue (37)

language skills - reading and formal writing skills. The process of working in an academic environment(16)

understanding the requirements of the course (19)

Academic learning and literacy needs of students are addressed through separate courses or as part of vocational subjects. Still others provide access to a study skills unit where students can get learning support. Nevertheless as described in the Language & Literacy chapter English literacy continues to be an issue in most institutions.

Personal factors

A number of personal factors account for the difficulties students face when accessing VET courses. Many students are shy and nervous about starting new courses. If attending courses involved travelling great distances from home then students often had transport problems or experienced anxiety in leaving the community to live closer to the educational institution. Homesickness was a major issue for those away from family and community. Some students also experienced problems with accommodation which was either unsatisfactory or short term thus requiring frequent moving. Added to these problems were financial problems experienced by many students due to limited amount of Abstudy.

Students are a little shy. You need to develop rapport with the students and this takes a little time(24)

Some students find out they do not like university, they experience homesickness (32)

Homesickness is a problem. Students take while to settle in and learn about ways of doing things. Just being in the city is a problem(14)

Students have a lot of problems with accommodation or adjusting to student accommodation. They require a settling in period. Their finances are another problem. Abstudy is a poxy amount of money. (36)

To make the early experience of VET more appropriate and positive, providers made use of a number of strategies which involved Aboriginal support staff.

Issues and concerns related to students' progression

Many providers reported a range of difficulties that act as barriers to success or lead to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students leaving courses.

Students are alienated by the Uni environment due to the very traditional, inflexible, bureaucratic nature of the institution., eg paper is more important than people. There pressure to conform to Uni culture makes it difficult to meet the needs of students culturally as well as meeting course needs (29)

With a few exceptions institutions reported moderate to high attrition rates 10% - 80%. The attrition rates included those who found the entry processes alienating and left, those who discovered that a particular course was not for them and moved to a more suitable one, as well as those

We have an high attrition rate. Within the first semester a 30-40% drop out rate is usual. There are a number of reasons to account for this.... child care problems; they (the students) move away; move to other courses; they experience a death in the family; they have health problems or family social problems (23)

They don't feel comfortable at TAFE. It is difficult to develop good relationships with staff (11)

They leave because the course is not suited to their needs...or they move onto another program (12)

Some students make the transition to another institution(15)

those who gained employment as a result of being in the course

their employment is helped by skill development (31)

who leave later because institutional and course structures did not accommodate the difficulties faced by students as they progressed through courses.

The comment below indicates the multiplicity of factors which contribute to students leaving.

Although the data did not specifically identify which forms of attrition were more significant, the size of the attrition rate suggests that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students continue to experience difficulties as they progress through courses.

Whereas institutional and educational factors contribute to the difficulties Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students experience when accessing courses, it seems that personal factors together with the inflexibility of educational structures work against students as they progress through courses.

Personal factors

A significant number of difficulties encountered by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students within courses related to personal factors including health, finance and employment, family and community, and accommodation.

There is 60% attrition for personal, social, economic reasons, because of illness; child care problems; moving away, city to country, country to city (28)

The attrition rate is 75-80%. People decide it is not for them; conflicting family commitments... Even if it (the program) is run at their own communities husbands complain about wives; when students change employment they do not get work release to study (31)

One third of our students leave. They are mostly women - due to family/home commitments. (33)

The attrition rate relates to financial - money problems; lack of understanding within the institution; personal crises; the pressure of Uni. Some find out it's not really what they want. (13)

The attrition rate is about 60%. Some of the reasons for this relate to family politics; negative (institutional) attitudes; lack of money. Abstudy is not a rate you could live on. Some students are offered work and leave. Others are not suited to the course. There is

Of these personal difficulties it appears that health problems contributed much to the pressures students experienced. Students were frequently absent from courses to care for their own health or that of significant others. This created difficulties in keeping up and meeting course deadlines especially where institutional deadlines were inflexible.

Providers most often reported that the family pressures including lack of child care, death of family members, conflict between commitments to families and to the course, and occasionally, lack of support from families led to student absence and decisions to give up the course.

Financial problems were also frequently cited as an issue. It was suggested that the amount of Abstudy provided did not adequately meet student's financial commitments, especially where the courses were full time. Students often had to seek employment to meet their financial commitments and in doing so were not able to continue their courses.

Providers acknowledged the need to consider the difficult and complex contexts in which many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students study. They provide some flexibility so students are able to negotiate extensions and work loads. However this flexibility is often constrained within course time frames and students are still required to meet institutional deadlines usually at the end of each semester. This tension between course flexibility and institutional inflexibility tends to transfer the pressure on students to the end of the Semester when more work is due.

sometimes conflict between students and staff. There is sometimes pressure from the Community (you think you're white) (14)

Abstudy isn't enough money. A lot of reasons for leaving a course revolve around money. (22)

It changes (the attrition rate). It is 10% this year. When they leave they leave to go into employment. Some decide the course is not for them. (32)

Students leave to gain employment especially due to financial needs. (29)

Institutional factors

Some institutional or educational factors made progress through VET courses more difficult for students.

The institutional factors identified as causing most difficulties for students related to inflexible course deadlines and complex procedures for gaining extensions. Rules associated with course deadlines were often determined by the institutions without considering the specific needs of indigenous Australian students. Once these were presented to students at the beginning of the course institutions felt that they no longer had a responsibility to students. It was the student's problem to solve if they had a conflict between personal and course responsibilities. If students required extensions they needed to complete, often quite complex processes to get consideration.

> We speak with students at the beginning (of the course) and discuss the time line to meet an agreed process and the consequences (of not meeting the time line). The students are given specific details (of work required) and any extensions are given on the previously discussed guidelines. (38)

Lateness after the negotiated last date of acceptance of assignments is given a fail. Students can apply for extensions. They are shown how to and told to request the extension in writing. Doctor's certificates are required for illness. (30)

We don't deal well with difficulties such as lateness. We talk to the people and put the onus back on the individual. (4)

We accept that the students will have difficulties and lay the rules down at the first instance. We work in the town. (24)

The issue of extensions is always a hard one. We have been too flexible in the past. (16)

Other providers sighted the general lack of understanding and support for indigenous Australian students within institutions. Providers suggested that some students "did not feel comfortable at the institution". The institutions had somewhat paternalistic and insensitive attitudes to the students which were difficult for students to deal with. Another significant educational factor identified as causing difficulties for student were the "difficulties in finding suitable tutors" (33), "who have both the subject expertise

(If they are late with assignments or absent due to family commitments) we talk to them, but if they are delivering the goods we try to overlook, and be good role models. (12)

They (the lecturers) know that Aboriginal people have a different concept of time. (9)

We relate to the work situation. We explain things and how they work in a white man's world. (7)

Being a provider of mature age students, we put the onus back on the students. They're responsible for their own needs. (20)

and the cultural sensitivity, and in keeping them"(31). This is particularly so for students studying at a distance or in rural and regional settings who generally had to find their own tutors.

In summary the data suggests that significant numbers of indigenous Australian students experience conflict and difficulties as they as they progress through courses trying to balance their role as a student with their personal commitments. This makes it difficult for students to give study a priority. The students require flexible systems and course structures which allow the student more leeway in meeting both the demands of a course and their personal demands. The personal difficulties faced by students did not appear to be critical to their leaving courses. It appeared to be inflexible course structures.

Provider concerns and issues

This section documents the pressures placed on providers running Aboriginal programs. A number of institutional, educational, community and student pressures were identified. At times the demands of the different stake holders competed with each other increasing the pressures experienced.

System pressures

We get pressure within the University environment due to the very traditional, inflexible, bureaucratic nature (of the institution). Paper is more important than people. Pressure to conform to University culture makes it difficult to meet the needs of students (29)

(We have difficulties with) the nature of the hierarchical processes (institutional), it is always a long involved process. There is a lack of Aboriginal control.(13)

There is a lot of paper work involved..... we have difficulties keeping to the time schedule (of the institution) (18)

Institutional factors which caused difficulties for providers included bureaucratic systems, funding arrangements, staffing and communication.

Providers often needed to operate within complex administrative systems which consumed a good deal of their time and restricted other important activities. They felt that they had limited control over their work load, time schedules and decision making in the programs for which they were responsible.

> (Our difficulties come from) being over managed and over worked.... lifting the (bureaucratic) restraints would make life easier (43)

Within the institution we experience racism... a lack of willingness to work as a team. The politics and outside influences affect the way we can work. There is a lack of clear direction or goals/strategies (11)

Within these same complex administrative systems providers experienced a degree of uncertainty. The guidelines provided were open to interpretation causing some conflict. The environment was politicised, making their position within the institution more tenuous, and subject to continuous renegotiation. There were difficulties with having their

Aboriginality acknowledged, respected and accepted in decisions about institutional procedures and course delivery. Non Aboriginal staff were often given more decision making power over Aboriginal programs.

The providers were employed by the institutions to deliver effective programs to indigenous Australian students but often found themselves in conflict with them and unable to make the changes appropriate to improving delivery.

> We have difficulties with trying to keep our own values and cultural identity within the institution (32)

As well as all these pressures providers suggested that they were having to defend the position of Aboriginal programs, and the students, within the larger institution. There was some pressure for Aboriginal students and programs to be assimilated into the mainstream.

> We get a lot of pressure within the institution. Non Aboriginal people don't realise we are culturally different. A lot of people believe we should be all mainstream (21)

For some providers funding issues and constraints made it difficult to deliver effective programs. The lack of funds or the uncertainty of funding caused difficulties. For others difficulties were encountered with the expectations of the funding bodies who pressured providers to keep up numbers.

> We have difficulties with the funding body who expect us to keep up our numbers (16).

Staffing and communication provided another pressure within institutions. Providers experienced difficulties with the lack of staff and the pressure it placed on others, the insecurity of tenure of staff and the lack of appropriate career paths. Communication with staff across the institution led to another set of difficulties eg providers receiving important information second hand.

> Staffing is a major difficulty. The demand on our time is a real problem. There is too much pressure. We also have career structure issues. There are few opportunities to work on our own development. We experience stress. stress, stress. (15)

We have difficulties working within the system. As personalities change, so does the interpretation of guidelines. (The course) is extremely political (3).

We experience a lot of pressures within the institution. We are expected to consult widely. Non Aboriginal academics can put forward their own political views (we can't). Middle and senior managers support non-Aboriginal people who believe they own the program and know better how to run the program than Aboriginal people. (34)

(We have a lot of problems) with the University structure due to lack of understanding of Aboriginal cultural commitments (33)

We experience pressure between the expectations of the institution and Aboriginal stereotypes. There is pressure on us to assimilate into the mainstream (2)

We have pressures from the lack of funding. We would like to go independent (10)

We have difficulties with the constant under-funding by the University. We get no support from the main University body (42)

We have no funds for college activities (28)

We have problems with the funding of field visits (3)

We provide distance education. We like to have one to one contact but we lack the funds to cater for the needs of all participants (20)

We have difficulties with the instability of funding. There is no guarantee of payment or when (33)

We have a lot of difficulties because of lack of staffing (13)

A major pressure comes from the insecurity (of tenure) of teaching staff. There is also a lack of communication (within the institution) and we have to rely on second hand information. (19).

Some of our problems relate to trying to catch up with non Aboriginal academic staff. We have no organised way of doing this (8).

Educational pressures

As an educationalist am I doing the right thing by the students? I try to put the students first and be sensitive to their needs and interests. The course must be culturally relevant and culturally appropriate for them. (12)

There is a lot of pressure to keep the curriculum vital and realistic (32)

We have difficulty in providing the community context that the students need (16)

We are pressured by the need to ensure that people get what they want. We need to give the students the context that they need to work in the community (1)

We are accountable to the community. We need to ensure that students with a degree can operate appropriately in the community (32)

There is a lack of course continuity because of a high rate of absenteeism (2)

We have a major drama with getting students to attend (39)

Providers were concerned with delivering relevant and appropriate curricula but did not have the power over the decisions required to make courses more culturally relevant in content, delivery and assessment. They were also faced by competing demands from the community, students and institutions and found it difficult to negotiate the relationships amongst these stakeholders.

Providers were also pressured by the educational implications of student absenteeism for course delivery. There were difficulties with maintaining course continuity for students who were absent. They needed to find ways of letting students catch up but did not find it easy to meet this commitment when institutional procedures were inflexible.

> If people are away lecturers feel they need to go back to help everyone to be at the same point. This places pressure on the teachers. We now encourage students to seek out the lecturer (out of class) (35)

Student pressures

We have difficulties with the demands on our time. We are working in too much pressure (15)

We have to deal with complaints from students, to clear up misunderstandings, do general trouble shooting. There are sometimes factions of Aboriginal groups with different agendas (19)

Sometimes the students have unrealistic expectations causing issues as they try to find a place in the group (32)

We have difficulty in drawing the line as to what we can and can't do. I can't be Mother Theresa (7)

We are not removed from the students. We work all the time. Plus we are part of the wider community (4)

Providers experience some pressure due to student demands which are constant, and at times overwhelming. As indicated in earlier discussions Aboriginal students experience a number of difficulties as they progress through VET courses. They are encouraged to use Aboriginal Units and support staff to assist with these problems and to navigate institutional structures and procedures. They also use the providers to air complaints when courses are not relevant, the system is insensitive or when there are disagreements with other groups of students. Providers did not always have the time allocated or the power to address some of the genuine issues raised by students. They were in a difficult position being at the one time representative of both the institution and the student. This appears to add to the stress that providers felt in trying to meet the multiple and sometimes conflicting demands placed upon them.

Stakeholder pressures

Providers experience a number of pressures relating to the competing demands of stakeholders. They are sometimes caught between the restrictions imposed by institutions and doing what they know to be appropriate for the groups for whom they are providing education. It is apparent that many providers identify more strongly with the indigenous Australian students and communities than with the institution which employs them. They experience some frustration and helplessness when they are unable to meet what they feel are realistic and appropriate demands because they do not have the power and the autonomy to make decisions. This conflict between their role within the institution and their role as an Aboriginal educator causes many providers a good deal of stress.

Providers identified pressures associated with some restrictive academic practices which made it difficult for them to provide flexible structures to meet the genuine needs of their students. Course deadlines and strict attendance requirements were examples of these. Providers were pressured by a need to support students who were experiencing personal difficulties but confined by the restrictive practices.

> Being flexible and considering extensions for students who have family and personal issues create many difficulties for us. Students have difficulty in meeting the University deadlines. (33)

Some providers expressed frustration at being caught between the students and the institution and having to take on the responsibility of making decisions which placed them in difficult and inappropriate positions. If they had more autonomy and power to make the decisions they feel that they have been employed to make VET outcomes would be more successful.

I feel pressured by the different agendas from groups having equal say. There are differences between Aboriginal community needs and the needs of our institution (7)

I have difficulties making sure that TAFE directions are in line with the Aboriginal People (8)

I have difficulty with getting a balance between the Aboriginalisation of the program and the standards imposed by the University (16)

I feel pressure to meet the needs of communities and deal with the University bureaucracy and hierarchy (22)

The pressure to conform to university culture makes it difficult to meet the needs of students culturally as well as meeting course requirements (29)

We are pressured by attendance issues. There is not a great deal of flexibility. We cannot give much consideration to the home and family life of the students (34)

We have difficulty getting students through the standards. We have a number of women who have family pressures who get discouraged by the time constraints. There are pressured to meet deadlines by the university structures which lack understanding of Aboriginal cultural commitments. The university needs more sensitisation (37)

We feel pressured by making decisions that have to be made and taking the consequences (37)

We give the bureaucrats what they want and we do what we know has to be done (23)

In summary there are a number of pressures that providers experience which relate to institutional, educational and student factors. These include unrealistic or demanding institutional requirements, uncertainty about their position within the institution, pressures to provide relevant and culturally appropriate courses within the confines of inflexible systems and pressures related to high expectations that students have. There are also pressures created by the competing demands of various stakeholders. Tension is created when demands are placed upon the provider which are in conflict with their own values and needs. They respond with frustration and by taking on the responsibility for making decisions which attempt to reconcile the opposing demands but which do not quite fit with institutional guidelines. It is apparent from the demands placed upon providers and the conflict they experience in meeting them that their position within the institution is not clear. It is also apparent that they do not have much autonomy within some institutions and are expected to meet inflexible institutional requirements which make it difficult for them to provide flexible structures which best meet the needs of the students for whom they provide education.

The issue of the role and responsibilities of providers appears to require more definition and providers require more autonomy to make decisions regarding the kinds of structures and delivery systems to be put in place to ensure successful VET outcomes for indigenous Australian students.

Conclusion

There was general agreement among providers on the factors that contribute to, or mitigate against, successful vocational educational outcomes for indigenous Australian students. This was so regardless of whether or not the course had a major educational or a vocational focus, or was conducted in a rural and remote, regional or city location.

Provider responses to the range of areas that need to be addressed by institutions commonly focused on the needs for the establishment of Aboriginal support services, culturally appropriate course delivery systems, specific courses, a separate space and an environment which is inclusive of Aboriginal cultures. Similarly there was concern about changes made to institutional structures and systems, some of which were inflexible and inappropriate to the needs of indigenous Australian students. It appears that increased support services, more culturally inclusive pedagogical practices and further modifications to institutional and course structures would be required to increase the effectiveness the VET provision for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

Within these general conclusions, providers clearly identified a number of key factors which contribute to successful outcomes. These include:

- The recognition, and catering for, the student's Aboriginality at each stage of the educational experience.

This was the most critical of factors identified. Recognition of the student's Aboriginality can be achieved through entry requirements which acknowledge and emphasise the student's own experiences; culturally inclusive pedagogy; and Aboriginal perspectives in course content and assessment. These are more effectively provided in courses which are specifically designed for Aboriginal students. Such courses provide students with more effective networks and support systems and culturally appropriate ways of learning. Where these were provided, students felt affirmed and participation in VET was higher and more successful.

- The inclusion of an Aboriginal unit and support services, and the provision of a defined cultural space, a centre, for students and staff.

Related to the recognition of the student's Aboriginality, were a range of other significant factors which acknowledged the difficulties that students experience within institutions not designed with their needs in mind. Students require the assistance of Aboriginal staff and support systems to negotiate complex and alienating institutional procedures and to get assistance with personal difficulties experienced as they try to meet competing personal and course demands. A culturally defined space was seen as important to affirm the student's culture and identity and to provide access to the support and to networks. Where these were provided, VET outcomes were more successful.

- The involvement of the community in course development and evaluation.

The involvement of indigenous Australian communities in the development and evaluation of courses was considered important in achieving culturally relevant and sensitive programs. Wide representation to mirror the diversity amongst indigenous Australian is needed to ensure that courses achieve this. The importance of culturally relevant courses to successful outcomes relates to the nature of education as a cultural process and to the specific requirements of significant numbers of students accessing VET to increase the skills required to work within and support their communities.

- A preference given to the recruitment of Aboriginal staff or non Aboriginal staff who have special personal qualities and understanding of Aboriginal cultures and histories.

- Iinduction and staff development activities for all staff who work with Aboriginal students.

The recruitment either of Aboriginal staff, or of non Aboriginal staff with special personal qualities, skills and appropriate cultural knowledge and understandings was identified as another key factor by providers. Staff with these special attributes are considered essential to achieving educational programs that are culturally sensitive. Allied to this is the need to provide induction and staff development for all staff working with Aboriginal students in order to ensure effective communication and understanding of the needs of students.

- Flexible institutional structures and course delivery systems which are responsive to the competing personal and course demands made on students.

- Clearer definition of the roles of providers within institutions and more autonomy for them to make decisions about Aboriginal programs.

Providers spoke of the difficulties they faced within institutions. They experienced frustration when inflexible institutional structures and lack of power did not allow them to change inappropriate course delivery systems to meet student and community demands. Their roles were not clear and they experienced conflict when the complex and competing demands placed on students and communities while participating in VET competed with those of institutions. To increase successful VET outcomes, providers stressed the need to make institutional structures and course requirements more flexible to take account of the demands placed on students. Providers also suggested that their roles within the institutions needed to be clarified and that they needed increased autonomy to make decisions regarding the improvement of course delivery systems to meet specific student needs.

- A system in which institutional and course structures are negotiated and checked with Aboriginal staff and communities for cultural appropriateness.

The difficulties associated with working within institutions raised another issue, that of negotiating the course structures and requirements. In order to ensure that institutions make culturally sensitive and appropriate decisions about structures and systems there is a need to check those decisions with Aboriginal staff and communities. Negotiating them would provide a most effective way of doing this and thereby increasing the effectiveness of delivery and outcomes.

The provider responses have identified a number of factors which contribute to, or mitigate against, successful vocational educational outcomes for indigenous Australian students. Successful outcomes are far more likely to be assured if these factors are taken into account by institutions in course design, support and delivery.

Chapter 6
Language and Literacy

As discussed earlier in this report, national training reforms, access and equity policies including a significant number of policies for indigenous people, are addressing the multiplicity of factors that influence access into VET, participation in VET and the outcomes of VET for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. There is now increased provision and increased access to VET as well as increased community involvement in the provision of programs, accompanied by more relevant and appropriate content and pedagogy. Yet in spite of this, English language and literacy (particularly English literacy), is still considered to be a critical factor affecting the outcomes of education and training for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

There is however relatively little research dealing specifically with literacy and its relationship with education and training outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, although there is considerable understanding that literacy levels influence the way social advantage and disadvantage are constructed and maintained.

This chapter examines the language and literacy issues that arose in the learner and institution interviews. It begins with a discussion on the issues from the learners' perspective and this is followed by an analysis of the issues as seen by those working in education institutions.

Learner interviews: language and literacy issues

Interviews were carried out with learners attending a range of courses including preparatory courses, TAFE vocational courses and undergraduate and postgraduate courses at universities.

The following discussion draws on the comments made by the learners in the interviews. Comments about English language and literacy relate to the learners' experiences in a particular course and reflect the various goals of the learners. While one section in the interview, 'Talking, reading and writing in the course,' was dedicated to English language and literacy, language and literacy issues emerged in other sections of the learner interviews, including:

- getting into the course;
- what happens in the classroom;
- how learning is assessed;
- what the student was getting from the course.

The language and literacy issues will be discussed under each of these headings.

Talking, reading and writing in the course

In this section some of the questions examined whether English language and literacy was a focus in the course content and the language of learning. Predicably the amount of attention to language and literacy was related to the nature of the course itself, for example, in preparatory or bridging courses there was more likely to be a very explicit focus on English language and literacy.

Nevertheless a range of interesting language and literacy issues emerged as learners reflected on their own various English language goals and the degree to which their own languages and their own ways of learning were acknowledged and used in their learning. These issues, supported with quotes from the interviews, are discussed below.

Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners expressed their goals in terms of their need to improve English language and to develop language skills to participate in English speaking contexts, for example:

> We've got to go out and teach kids in Standard English (Bob,74).
>
> We appreciate the huge focus on the need to be literate in academic language and standard language (Ellen, 213).

While many learners felt their English language goals were being met, this was not always the case. For some learners there was not enough emphasis on standard English, for example:

> They don't pick us up on our language. You know, what's politically correct in the world now, our language is accepted (Bert, 94).

This quote draws our attention to the tension between the need for Aboriginal ways and Aboriginal languages to be acknowledged and worked with and the learners' need to focus on English language and literacy. This tension is also reflected in the following two quotes:

> Yet our language needs to be acknowledged and allowed. This year she accepts some Koori English (Ada, 34).
>
> We're timetabled an hour a day on language, but they mostly give us maths. Sometimes they give us language sheets to fill in, but only now and then - nouns and that (Amy, 25).

In some courses an effective balance is negotiated and maintained, for example:

> They accepted our language verbal but written had to be standard Australian English (Ruth, 427).
>
> Most of the teachers have taught and worked with Koori people before and are familiar with the way we talk and the meaning of some of our words (Col, 134).
>
> They understand the way Aboriginal people talk. We talk about it all the time (Sandra, 477).
>
> Yes, they won't put you down, but they'll tell you the correct way of saying it and point out that in mixed classes you should use the 'correct' language (Kerry,5).
>
> If we're talking in Koori English they don't put us down, but they approach us another way by saying that in the classroom we've got to be positive role models and use standard English (Mavis, 44).

> They don't pull us up for using Aboriginal English. We recognise that we use appropriate language in certain places (Betty,54).
>
> Those that are culturally aware/sensitive will let you do your assignment with an Aboriginal perspective (Noni, 366).

Without this balance, for some learners, there was a lot of discontent and shame, for example:

> Lecturers do not take into account the Aboriginal way of saying things. Some students be made to feel shame, anger and be in tears as a result of using Aboriginal words. One lecturer said to one student, 'Could you please explain so we could all understand the secret' (Ellen, 213).

Many learners looked at the learning situation as a learning exchange particularly if the teachers are non-Aboriginal, for example:

> The lecturers learn a lot from us (Ada , 34).
>
> They're learning about Aboriginal people and their ways, culture, attitudes, organisations now from us (Cliff, 104).
>
> We've got one Aboriginal lecturer .... some of the tutors are Aboriginal. The others are learning - from being with us (Arthur, 64).

For some learners there was an awareness of the potential loss in studying in non-Aboriginal institutions, for example:

> In the process of getting a degree we run the risk of losing our identity and becoming Anglicised (Nathan, 307).

The importance of using Aboriginality in the learning comes through in many interviews, for example: 'Lecturers are Aboriginal and have an understanding of our way of saying things/expressing ourselves' (Parry, 377).

In summary, from the learners' perspective while the teaching and learning processes need to draw on the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages and ways of learning they also need to focus on the English language and literacy needs of the learners. This includes the English language and literacy demands of learning.

Getting into the course

Several questions in this section looked at the English language and literacy requirements for getting into a course as well as the nature of the entry assessment tasks.

The need to have a certain level of English language and literacy was related to the kind of course. For example in bridging courses, which focused on English language and literacy, there were no specific language entry requirements, while in other courses a certain standard was required. From the learners' perspective this standard was expressed in terms such as 'Basic English skills', 'Standard English', 'Good English' or 'HSC level' or 'Basic essay writing skills'.

In some courses even when a specific literacy standard was required, there was no formal language and literacy entry assessment. In these courses, entry was based on previous

educational experiences and qualifications. However in other courses learners were required to undertake a formal language and literacy assessment. Learners indicated a variety of kinds of assessment tasks that were used to select them for entry into a course. These tasks included interviews, short tests including comprehension and a range of writing tasks such as essays and personal profiles.

For some learners the assessment tasks were considered to be inappropriate in terms of the relevance of the content or the way the tasks were designed. For example:

> The numeracy/literacy test was difficult as the questions had no relevance - they were what would you do in this situation kind of questions (Malcolm, 274).
>
> Entrance exam very patronising and aimed at level 4 standard (Ellen, 210).
>
> Exam aimed at a year 9 level and was a patronising test (Frank,199).
>
> I couldn't understand most of the questions. I had to adapt to their way of thinking.(Raylene, 414).
>
> Selection test with basic English and comprehension tests weren't relevant because I had done HSC English and can express myself all right (Mary, 284).
>
> The readings were on Aboriginal issues that most of us are familiar with. Some found it hard to do, because they hadn't been to school for a long time. Charlotte and Dot said the questions were back to front to them. They're old and they talk different (Bob, 71).
>
> I don't know what relevance the maths test was. Tests and exams really intimidate me. Koori people were always told they were dumb and when it came to a test they wouldn't pass (Betty,51).

Other learners felt the tasks were appropriate. For example:

> It was fair and I felt OK about it (Sid, 494).
>
> I think it's really good (Regina,394; Ruth, 444).
>
> The readings were on Aboriginal issues that most of use are familiar with (Bob, 71).

In summary the range of assessment was perceived to offer tasks that varied in both kind and appropriateness. Some learners who had little awareness of the purpose of the assessment tasks would benefit from knowing why they were doing the tasks and how their performance in the tasks would be used.

What happens in the classroom

While there were no specific language and literacy questions in this section some language and literacy issues emerged. These relate to the amount of attention given to language and literacy in the learning and whether or not Aboriginal experiences and ways of learning were part of the teaching and learning process.

Again the learners' responses regarding the significance of language and literacy were often dependent on a number of factors. These include: whether or not the course or subject was specifically designed for Aboriginal students, and if not, whether Aboriginal students are in the minority and whether or not the course was a preparatory or bridging course.

In courses that were not specifically targeting Aboriginal learners there was a considerable amount of criticism by the learners of the teaching and learning process. For example:

> Have difficulty coping with self learning from a text book. 'Too much content in too little time'. Lecturers prefer it if the student don't give opinions. Too much sitting and listening. Staff are unapproachable. Give the impression that they are better than us (Ida, 231).

> Just too hard for us Aboriginal girls. No say in learning activities - you attend lectures and learnt the material. Up to us to do the chasing and some would be more willing than others to see us (Sally, 489).

> We get too many assignments all at once. It's a challenge putting it on paper. It's easy to do but hard to write down. We don't have any say in assignments but we do in lessons (Kerry, 7).

Such comments illustrate the connection between the inadequate attention to English language skills for learning and the lack of acknowledgment of the learners' experiences and opinions. The following quotes reflect the same coupling of omissions even in preparatory programs:

> Only the Aboriginal Studies draws on my experience. The teachers plan everything. I just go along with it. Trying to get better writing skills is a challenge (Bert, 96).

> Felt uncomfortable with lecturers made me feel dumb; not enough personal contact; very much on your own (Jenny, 241).

> Not negotiable - everything all set out. Would like to be consulted and not just told what is available. Teachers didn't always listen to what we were saying, they thought they knew what was best (Charlie, 126).

In summary the responses in this section reflect similar issues to those that were raised in the 'Talking, reading and writing in the course' section, ie., the need for teaching and learning processes to allow for particular learning needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students while maintaining engagement with the learning of English language and literacy skills.

How learning is assessed

A number of questions in this section are relevant to English language and literacy. In the learners' responses the issues that arose relate to the balance of spoken & written assessment tasks as well as the balance of practical & theoretical assessment tasks.Once again variables that related to the particular teacher, the subject and the course influenced the extent to which these issues were raised by the learners.

The mode of assessment was an important issue for most learners. While for some learners the more traditional kind of assessment tasks - writing tasks - were appropriate, many learners appreciated both a variety of modes and the opportunity to negotiate the nature of the assessment. The following quotes reflect the importance of choice and flexibility:

> Variety - straight essay, own choice project, oral presentation - all catering for different learning styles (Billy, 87).

> X always gives us written assignments, but Y gives us a choice - oral and written. Not much room to negotiate different assessment tasks (Ada, 37).
>
> As many students don't have English as their first language an option should be the oral assessment process (Ellen, 215).
>
> Assessments should be more flexible. They should understand our community is different. When they watch you in oral presentations, we don't do too good - but if they weren't in there, I could talk all day - no problems. May be they could go out and we could show them a video - later (Arthur, 67).
>
> Exams only test my memory, not my knowledge of subject. Should be able to express knowledge orally in a non-threatening environment (Noelene, 330).
>
> Flexible negotiated assessment but this has to do with the mode of study and not whether it is culturally appropriate. More oral as many Kooris have problems in putting information into written form. System promotes one-up-manship which is contrary to Aboriginal ways and patterns of thought (Nathan, 310).

This last quotation reinforces the idea that not only learning but also assessment should take into account Aboriginal ways. This was also reflected in the following:

> Prefers to work in a group for assessment. He like it when the group produced a video for use in an oral presentation (Malcolm, 280).
>
> Would like more two-way interaction - more visual and more oral (Sid, 300).
>
> I feel I am better in a 'hands on' situation. Would prefer more practical than theoretical. This would make courses attractive, thus higher retention rates (Jack, 262).
>
> Instead of written stuff I'd like more observation stuff, ie, lecturers observe you in your work and see how you do things (Kerry, 8).
>
> More RPL per life experiences. More hands-on and practicals (Richard, 440).
>
> Need to assess an Aboriginal perspective to things (Noni, 369).
>
> Measurement tool of universities is the mastery of the English language. This causes problems for Aboriginal students who speak and write in Aboriginal English. Non verbal assessments should be considered for example: paintings. Oral assessment should also be considered as an effective tool (Greg,223).

However the desire to be assessed in Aboriginal 'ways' is not shared by all learners. The following quotes illustrate how some learners want to learn and be assessed in non-Aboriginal ways:

> Assessment is appropriate because I want to learn to do what the mainstream does (Billy, 87).
>
> I wanted to learn the white way (Rita, 410).

It seems, though, that in order to do academic writing a lot more support is needed. For example:

> I need ongoing support - I'm not sure how to start an essay, then after I have a go I'm not sure how to finish it off. I have problems getting started, researching and pulling out relevant information then constructing the essay. I have trouble with academic writing and I was thinking I should do a bridging course to help me (Ada, 37).

I have heaps of trouble with writing. It comes into my head and goes again before I can write it down (Bert, 97).

Suggestions - teachers look at our drafts of writing and suggest ways of improving by discussing what we've already written (Charlie, 127).

What are you getting from the course?

Although there were no specific language and literacy questions in this section, the learners' responses to questions about their learning outcomes often related to English language and literacy. Some of the language and literacy gains, as expressed by the learners, were very specific and related to their employment goals and tasks, for example:

My learning outcomes are helping me to put things on job application (Ada, 38).

(My study). helped at work - writing letters and reports and overall comprehension. It has been helpful in meeting my personal goals which are linked to employment goals. In writing letters/reports and overall comprehension.(Parry, 381).

Public talking, making notices, flyers (Roma, 451).

While for others their language gains were more generic, for example:

My maths and writing has improved (Ray, 401).

Enhanced my English skills (Jenny, 243).

My letter writing and everything has improved (Arthur, 68).

Developing my writing skills (Noni, 361).

More knowledge about my culture as well as English and maths (Malcolm, 281).

Other learners were not so positive about their English language and literacy gains, for example:

I'm still unemployed. I still can't read and write to the level I'd like to (Charlie, 128).

I just want much more writing skills. I want more practice at writing until I get good at it. I think a larger slice of the course should be built around writing (Bert, 99).

Still need to improve English - tool for power and job promotion. Standard English should be built into the course (Ada, 39).

Importantly many learners felt that their study has helped them to learn the skills to move on to further study and often these skills relate to English language and literacy, for example:

I learnt academic writing and this is useful (Noni, 371).

It has give me the skills to be academic, basically. Those skills you'll never lose - and it's given me a thirst for more (Mavis, 48).

It's been a stepping stone (Bob, 78).

A good basis for further study (Mary, 291).

Has given me confidence to go into my degree course next year (Parry, 381).

Laid foundations (Shirley, 521).

In summary, in spite of the many issues that focus on the negative aspects of their education experience many learners have gained considerable language skills.

Institution interviews

The interviews were carried out with a range of different staff working in a number of different programs in a diverse range of educational institutions. Comments made reflected the respondents' role in the institution and the nature of the course. As in the learner interviews, English language and literacy issues were raised not only in the 'Language and Literacy' section but also in most of the other sections.

The discussion below is organised around the relevant sections in the interview.

Entry criteria

While almost half of the institutions stated that students needed a specific level of English language and literacy skills to enter the course, very few of the institutional responses referred to language and literacy factors that influenced the entry criteria.

Most of the responses focused on general statements about entry criteria and the procedures in place for working out if students met the criteria. A range of educational, social and psychological factors were cited as informing the entry criteria used to identify suitability for a particular course. For example:

> Family, community and employer support (3).
>
> Must be working in community office. Support of employer (18).
>
> Commitment and reasonable understanding of what's going on (4).
>
> Demonstrate an interest to learn (11).
>
> Take into account attitude (13).
>
> Look at level of literacy and numeracy (16).
>
> Their educational background (21).
>
> Mainly motivation (24).
>
> Looking for commitment and Aboriginal ways of working (25).
>
> Selection tests designed to identify if student has potential (29). (33).

Interestingly most of the above areas refer to psychological criteria, yet this was often considered to be a difficult criteria to assess. Some of the procedures for assessing the learners' suitability or readiness for a course include:

> Students' feedback at interviews (2).
>
> Mainly through testing and interviewing (5).
>
> Do an assessment test on literacy and numeracy (8).
>
> We get them to put something in writing plus an interview (12).
>
> Informal interview with parent or guardian (10).
>
> Three day selection - lecture, essays, quiz, tutorial, small maths component (22).
>
> A little test - literacy writing (24).

Write page about themselves to assess grammar, expression (34).

Unlike the responses in the learner interview there were few or no comments on the appropriateness or effectiveness of the entry criteria or the procedures for identifying whether or not the learners met the criteria. This perhaps reflects a lack of evaluation of entry processes.

Assessment

A number of questions related to assessment were asked in the Aboriginal Culture and Community section. Although English language and literacy issues in assessment were not explicitly addressed, responses to the questions in this section were often relevant to English language and literacy.

At times the responses to questions about assessment reflected some of the main issues that were raised by the learners. These included, first, the idea of working with mainstream standards, for example:

Because of the university standards (4).

(We are). dealing with higher education (5).

To suit the industry requirement and a little to accommodate the learning style of students (8).

In line with College - TAFE rules (24).

All assessments meets the needs of mainstream in preparing them for future study (25).

Give students experience with uni course assessment methods - journal, oral history research report, essay to assess if student can attain tertiary writing standard (31).

Being flexible in order to take into account learners' Aboriginal culture, identity and identity, was also raised for example:

A combination of all forms of assessment (1).

Give the students the opportunity to demonstrate knowledge, skills in a manner common to them (yet). within TAFE guidelines (11).

All assessment is conducted on individual student skill and learning styles (all taken into consideration). (14).

Within the CAFE program everything is negotiated and how students want to be assessed is the way teachers go (19).

Hands-on type activities. Real life experiences (18).

Variety of methods to give students even chance in presenting their knowledge in the best possible way (33).

To show how it's done rather than write about the bastard (36).

Many of the respondents referred to the importance of 'support'. While at times the nature of support was not defined, in some interviews the respondents explained what kind of support was offered. Often this support involved providing opportunities for students to work together, and hence to support each other. At times 'support' involved designing

tasks that were appropriate to the students' learning style, either in terms of the nature of the assessment task, or in terms of the pace:

> Assessments should be experiential (11).
>
> Include oral assessment - more suited to Aboriginal students (20).
>
> A slower learning process (14).
>
> Time is the issue. I give them the time. Give them a couple of chances (21).

A few times 'support' was described in terms of direct teaching support in order to reach 'academic' standards, for example:

> Giving variety for each person, to highlight what they're good at and what they need to work more on, so they can be given appropriate support on an individual level to reach academic standards (30).
>
> A lot of talking rather than reams of notes (31).
>
> Give assessment early in semester. Discuss assignments , provide skills, provide questioning to extend thinking (34).

At other times 'support' was integral to the classroom learning and study skills were integral to this learning, for example: 'Study skills built into the course' (32). While in some institutions the focus was on supporting the learners to achieve mainstream academic standards, in other places the attention was on shifting what these standards are, for example:

> Prepare for procedures within university but looking to change to become more flexible and meet Aboriginal learning styles as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people learn by doing. In the future the course will be totally Aboriginal specific (33).

.c.Language and literacy

In this section the first question looked at the level of language and literacy required to do a course and this connects with the earlier questions on entry criteria. In general the requirement to have a specific English language and literacy level was dependent on the course and the institution. Therefore, for example, in bridging or preparatory courses there was no specific level for entry, while for many of the mainstream university courses a specific level was required.

Interestingly the respondents in the institution interview, often described a particular level generically, in a way that was similar to the learners' responses, for example:

> A high level of literacy (1).
>
> Not a formal level but have to be able to read and write (4).
>
> Basic literacy and numeracy (6).
>
> Need to have a good level of literacy and language comprehension (8).
>
> A good command of English language (13).
>
> Basic level literacy (35).
>
> Yes around about high school level (17).

Few responses provided more specific indication of the English language and literacy level, for example, in references to 'essay skills' (29), or 'filling out forms' (31). Little detail was given about how this level was assessed. Many did not provide any information while others gave some indication, for example:

> Test - assessment and interviews (4).
>
> Observe if they are functional readers (6).
>
> Written assessment (global literacy profile). (8).
>
> We have an interview and ask students as to why this institution, why this course (15).
>
> Interview, write (21).
>
> Reading comprehension, close passage, essay (30).
>
> If no school report or HSC, (then) small written piece, eg., what made you decide to come here (32).
>
> Ability to cope with writing ideas assessed through initial writing tasks (34).

Very few people responded to the question on whether preparatory courses helped to prepare students for their current study. Most only indicated the kind of course. Only one person made a positive comment about the effectiveness of such courses, for example: 'Helps students to reach a level of literacy' (10). One person actually named the only effective preparatory course, that is, 'Only if they come through the DEET Labour Market Programs' (11).

It is interesting to speculate why so few comments were made on the effectiveness of the preparatory courses. Perhaps the question was not understood, perhaps the interviewer didn't feel in a position to probe further or perhaps the courses were not considered to be very helpful and the interviewees were wary about being too negative.

A lot more information was provided in response to the question about what teachers do to help students to master academic reading and writing tasks. The responses indicated that a range of strategies were in place - and these strategies tended to fall into two groups.

In the first group the strategies were integral to the whole teaching and learning process, for example:

> Incorporated in the course design (1).
>
> Complete literacy and writing all the way through this course (5).
>
> Apply it to work and day to day training . Group work and group learning (7).
>
> Do project work to bring out these skills (8).
>
> Assist the student to what the processes are. Exposure to wide range of reading (11).
>
> We incorporate it into other activities (13).
>
> The whole course is literacy based (19).
>
> Ordinary teaching methods (34).

While a second set of strategies related to a range of activities that were available in addition to the curriculum, for example:

> It is introduced in the learning support centre. Students apply for one on one. One to assistant. Encourage the student to get a tutor (12).
>
> Sometimes workshops. We run short courses on exam preparation, note taking, essay writing (13).
>
> Supply tutor (15).
>
> We have extra classes for study skills. We have an academic support officer (22).
>
> Given series of small assignments each week to assess improvement generally. Taken to library, taught how to research, write arguments. Taught note-taking. Academic studies techniques (35).
>
> Tutorial support. Extra lessons (26).
>
> Encourage students to have tutors (17).
>
> Only if students wants to. Tutoring (36).

In some institutions a combination of strategies are in place offering students a range of choices, for example:

> Have a literacy person on all the time. Do workshops (3).
>
> One to one tuition for short periods of time. Small classes. Read the newspaper every day (9).
>
> Get students to look at variety of genres and teach how to approach each task in the desired way via exercises. Study skills component of course as well (29).
>
> Help students by providing academic reading/writing tasks. Assigned tutors etc. each student. Embedded activities within course. Library orientation using university library staff 2 hours per week (34).

Most of the responses offered little evaluation on the effectiveness of the kinds of activities and strategies used to help Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners with academic reading and writing tasks. This is in contrast to the responses in the learner interviews, where most of the comments focused on the effectiveness of their language learning. There was one exception in the institutional responses - Very fucking little, (13).

The lack of evaluative comment suggests a lack of critical reflection on current provision. This is particularly at odds with the importance placed on English language and literacy in general in the VET system and in particular in relation to the responses to another question in the survey which looked at the importance people placed on English language and literacy skills. The majority of responses suggested that English language and literacy was indeed a very high priority. For example.,

> Very high priority. A shift is occurring within Aboriginal communities to work harder in this area (1).
>
> Very important for us and students (3).
>
> See the relevance of this to pass on information in a bilingual and bicultural world (7).
>
> It's the highest priority through our institution (8).

The relevance of language and literacy expressed in the above responses was almost unanimous, although some comments were more conditional, for example:

> Only if it's going to assist our students to get on (12).
>
> Only if students are lacking in this area (13).
>
> We all know it's a priority but it's not the only thing to hinge a job on (26).

There was a shared understanding that English language and literacy is a high priority, which was reflected in the significant amount of attention given to English language and literacy. Yet it seems in the light of the concerns expressed by the learners in their interviews, their English language and literacy needs and goals are not always being met. Perhaps a more reflective evaluation of the provision is needed. Given that the nature of institutional provision is dynamic, ongoing analysis about how goals are being met and whose goals are being met is critical.

A question on Aboriginal languages was included in the Language and Literacy section of the survey. It asked about the use of Aboriginal languages in the classroom - in terms of the extent of their use and how they are used.

While in the majority of institutions there was little use of Aboriginal languages, in these institutions some people commented on the use of Aboriginal English, for example:

> No (language). Only Aboriginal English (9).
>
> Aboriginal English (11).
>
> Yes, we actually encourage the use of language and Aboriginal English. We try to balance the two (15).
>
> Aboriginal English is spoken all the time. We come from Moree, it's our way of talking. I mean we have our own way of saying things (24).
>
> Not so much Aboriginal language. Aboriginal English is used all the time.(26).

Some of the comments suggest regret at the lack of use of Aboriginal languages, ('No, unfortunately'. 20). In several institutions the responses indicated that there was substantial use of Aboriginal languages, for example:

> Yes, most speak language (Ngarrendjeri). (6).
>
> Yes, all the time speak in the mother tongue. By staff and the local trainers (who are) mainly traditional women and men (7).
>
> Yes, both Aboriginal languages and Aboriginal English (25).

A few responses included some idea about how Aboriginal languages are used. For example:

> Staff do take it into account when they do their marking (22).
>
> Yes, depending on the teacher and we use Aboriginal English as a translation tool (23).
>
> Students bring own Aboriginal language words - usually Aboriginal English. Yes, it is used as a translation tool, especially as students find it difficult to relate to academic language (29).

Can write in Aboriginal English is accepted and students are informed another way - this gives students options. Aboriginal English used to help understanding (32).

No, not generally, have had guest speakers from community - would like to develop this in future (35).

No, but in the future seen as a very necessary tool to link students to new knowledge (33).

Not used as a teaching tool, however, Aboriginal English becomes part of everyday usage. Aboriginal English used as link to move the student to new words and language within academic life (34).

Conclusion

Language and literacy continues to be a significant issue influencing indigenous peoples' access and participation in VET. This significance is voiced by both learners and providers. While various concerns were expressed there is a common understanding that for most indigenous people, English language learning is a significant dimension of their learning and that therefore greater attention should be given to English language and literacy in relation to all aspects of education and training provision. This attention however also needs to acknowledge the cross-cultural dimensions of learning in VET.

The tensions around English language and literacy focus on the complex issues that arise in the negotiation of the cross-cultural relationships that emerge as indigenous people (with all their diversity in terms of life experiences in non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal communities), engage with institutional and non-Aboriginal learning arrangements.

The main tensions that emerged relate to:

- the range of English language and literacy learning goals of indigenous learners;
- the use of English language and literacy as part of entry criteria
- the extent to which Aboriginal languages are acknowledged and are a part of the teaching and learning process;
- the amount and nature of English language and literacy support and the degree to which such support is integrated into the teaching and learning process;
- the nature of the assessment tasks used for entry purposes and used to measure learning gains;
- the extent to which Aboriginal ways of learning are accommodated without compromising mainstream 'standards'.

Chapter 7

Implications for Improving Course Delivery

One of the main objectives of the project was to make recommendations about better models of provision of VET for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

It was argued that the research could contribute to policy objectives of increased access, participation and success of indigenous people by pointing to ways that delivery systems can better address the needs of indigenous people including language issues that are integral to successful learning. The research aimed to provide information that would assist in the professional development of VET teachers and the development of culturally inclusive course design and delivery.

This chapter of the report considers the implications of the research for these objectives by:

- reviewing the concept of participation as a cultural process, and its implications for improving practice;
- outlining some key principles which will help to make vocational, education and training provision more effective;
- summarising some of the course delivery issues to be addressed by institutions in their provision for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities as a basis for the Recommendations found in the Summary Report.

Understanding participation as a cultural process

In Chapter One it was stated that one goal of the project was to provide the kind of information and guidance that would help administrators and teachers make their practice more culturally inclusive for all students and reduce the alienating effects of 'mainstream' institutions often experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. The first step is to appreciate that participation is, at every step, a cultural process.

The research supports the view that improvements in delivery must be built upon a number of key understandings about the nature of participation in vocational education and training. The report has stressed the *complexity* of the delivery of programs within institutions as they interface with Aboriginal communities, government and other influences. 'Provision' of courses is not a simple one-dimensional process but a complex system for managing course delivery within an institution. It may be understood as a set of arrangements for access, entry, teaching and learning, assessment, support and so on.

These systems or processes are not mechanical, but human and interactive. However, their very institutionalisation in formal education and training makes it difficult to see that they reflect *cultural choices*. Formal systems select and value one sort of knowledge rather than another, 'transmit' certain skills and knowledge and assess outcomes through processes

that are social and cultural. Therefore, the task of improving models of delivery has to first recognise that 'models of delivery refers to arrangements that need to be adapted through negotiation with indigenous people so that education and training is not experienced as alienating but as accommodating their cultural identity.

The conclusion reached by the research is that positive outcomes of participation in VET for indigenous Australians are achieved by attending to cultural appropriateness in each aspect of the complex processes of program delivery. It is achieved *not only* by setting up culturally appropriate models of delivery that are suited to the social, economic and educational needs of communities but *also* by the way such models are implemented and adapted through ongoing consultation and negotiation with indigenous people about the nature of effective practices at each point in the delivery process.

The two dimensions of effective provision have to be grasped together. The focus of good practice has to be *both* on the cultural appropriateness of the program at each step of the process (which may vary according to context) *and* on the effectiveness with which program delivery is managed, the 'institutional issues' to which McDaniel (McDaniel and Flowers, 1995) refers in his critique of Aboriginal education. Positive outcomes, and quality in education and training experiences, are the result of achieving effectiveness on both these dimensions.

Thus the project has deepened an understanding that the way to improve provision for Aboriginal people is to focus on the relationships between communities, institutions and courses and the range of factors that make up the 'effectiveness' of any one of these models. The alternative is to prescribe one or more ideal models of delivery which appear to have served Aboriginal people well.

There are several reasons for acknowledging a diversity of models and emphasising that any model must achieve both cultural appropriateness and an effective 'systems' approach to delivery.

- The analysis of context in Chapter Two emphasised the diversity of culture and the range of situations and needs of indigenous people. This diversity refers to a number of factors: the remoteness of the community; its economic and social character; the kinds of education and training needs of people in different localities and work situations and the purpose of the individuals' learning; the degree of access to the relevant courses and so on. This implies that some models will work better in some contexts than other in to achieve culturally appropriate delivery.

- The value of any model depends on the steps taken to assure the effectiveness of each part of the 'system' and of the relationship between the parts. Different features of the system may help or hinder access and participation by indigenous people, depending on how effectively 'institutional issues' are negotiated.

- In the nature of human systems, there are dynamic relationships between the factors involved in 'delivery' as there are between institution and community and between institution and program factors. Positive outcomes are a result of working with these dynamics.

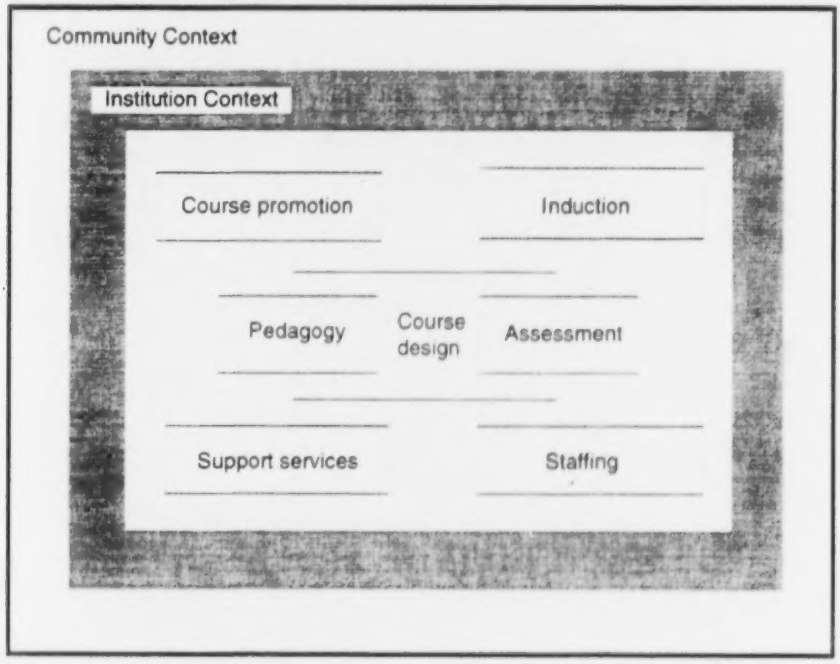
The relationships among factors affecting outcomes are complex, but not so complex that they cannot be described, and the experience of the project has gradually developed our understanding that the complex nature of provision needs to be seen first and broadly in terms of the relationships of the course, the institution and the Aboriginal communities to which it relates - the *community context* of provision. Within these institution-community relationships, and of course affecting it in important ways, are the factors in the *context of course delivery* including the delivery mode and teaching and learning and arrangements. The factors here, and their relationships to each other, can also be described. It is helpful to see these factors as comprising a complex system of delivery, in a holistic way, where the parts affect each other and the effectiveness of the whole program.

In the following discussion, several guiding principles are set out. These refer to effective practice in the immediate context of course delivery, based on the findings of the research in Chapters Four, Five and Six. The discussion then returns to broader questions of the relationships between VET institutions and Aboriginal communities.

Principles for effective VET provision

The heart of course delivery are the teaching learning relationships and an understanding of these relationships can act as a springboard for analysing the broader relationships of the institution's interactions with its indigenous Australian communities. Figure 7.1 represents in a schematic way these relationships.

Figure 7.1
Course delivery system, and the institution and community context



data is that it has focussed attention on how Aboriginal people and the institutions experience each of these 'systems within a system' of course delivery - the promotion of the course, entry and induction, course design, teaching and learning and assessment, and staffing and support factors.

Something can be said about each of these 'systems' in its own right, but in the following discussion it will be important to emphasise how each part is related to other parts and helps to comprise an effective whole.

The research has shown that there are a number of **guiding principles** that can be useful in promoting more effective system of delivery. These principles take into account the dialectic relationship of the community, the institution and course delivery.

(a) Recognise that participation in vocational education and training is a cultural activity.

Participation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and other groups involves cross-cultural experience and communication. Successful experience in formal education means learning the 'academic culture' of its institutions, which may be in conflict with indigenous cultural meanings. Each part of the course delivery process is a cross-cultural experience.

The research demonstrates clearly some of the ways in which Aboriginal and Torres Straits Islander people bring a different cultural meaning to their experience of mainstream education and training:

- Older people often enter education and training later in life and through their involvement in work for the community
- Work and access to education and training are closely linked for learners. Work often leads to associated training
- When Aboriginal students choose a course, personal goals, employment needs and community benefit are bound up together in their decision
- Networking with communities is main way courses for indigenous communities are promoted and 'the 'grapevine' is often the way students access relevant courses
- First impressions of enrolment and initial class experiences can be culturally shocking to new students who need to be inducted into the academic culture of formal courses.

(b) Make a space for Aboriginality within the institution

There is a consensus among the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents to the research that the basic condition for achieving success in VET is the recognition of Aboriginal culture and identity at every stage of the educational experience. This is not to say that it is enough in itself, to guarantee success. However, lack of cultural understanding

by staff is a negative factor that can result in negative outcomes including failure and withdrawal.

The research points to the value of institutions making a 'cultural space' for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to affirm their culture and identity. Participants give a high value to studying together and to Aboriginal support units. The argument that effective Aboriginal education must pay attention to the 'institutional issues' as well as the 'cultural issues' should not be misunderstood as saying that indigenous people should be assimilated in mainstream modes of delivery in order to achieve comparable standards. The quality and effectiveness in course delivery cannot be achieved without a cultural appropriateness, and vice versa.

The research interviews showed that this 'cultural space' can be defined in a number of ways:

- All-Aboriginal class groups which allow Aboriginal perspectives to be developed on subject matter during course delivery and which provide peer support for participants
- the development of culturally inclusive curriculum for all students, incorporating Aboriginal perspectives in course content for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal classes
- the employment of Aboriginal administrators, teachers, tutors and support staff
- the maintenance of modes of delivery such as the block mode which can overcome particular barriers faced by indigenous people in accessing courses and which provide a 'cultural vehicle' for participation
- the provision of support services to meet individual and group needs especially Aboriginal support units
- the dedication of physical spaces which display cultural material including artefacts, indigenous art and performance.

(c) Involve Aboriginal communities in course design and delivery.

The interviews showed that the community involvement of Aboriginal people and organisations in designing course delivery is an important factor assisting positive outcomes. The interviews suggested that this is seen as one among a range of factors that are needed to make course delivery effective, together with Aboriginal teaching staff to deliver the program and the involvement of Aboriginal people in learning experiences.

Frequently courses will aim to teach what Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people accept is non-Aboriginal knowledge and skills. As McDaniel points out, this is why Aboriginal people choose to participate in mainstream institutions. However this does not mean that non-Aboriginal knowledge and skills should be delivered within an assimilitationist pedagogy. The pedagogy needs to acknowledge and utilise the knowledge and experiences learners bring to the course and look at the learning experience as a 'broadening' of knowledge rather than a 'replacement' of knowledge.

The research provided some important guides to course design:

- Present content or subject matter in culturally inclusive ways and attempt to relate it to Aboriginal culture and identity. This can be done by framing content in terms of Aboriginal perspectives, using relevant curriculum materials.
- Course delivery can highlight for the indigenous student that learning will involve moving between two cultures, and that learning how to do this is an important part of learning the 'educational culture' in its own right
- Aboriginal teaching staff, or non-Aboriginal staff who are effective cross-cultural communicators and culturally sensitive, are needed to bring this about
- Course design will facilitate positive outcomes for Aboriginal people where it plans for interactive, collaborative and experiential learning.

The research again suggests that course design factors cannot be judged in isolation from other factors including staffing, induction and support. Any mode of delivery can involve a 'trade off' of these factors for students. The block mode is valued because it offers a range of support services, but takes the student away from home and community support and adds to these pressures. The remote mode or local study is valued because the student studies in the community, close to family and community but with less access to Aboriginal group learning, to academic support and other services.

(d) Be flexible and negotiate appropriate teaching-learning processes

Effective Aboriginal education involves the acquisition of non-Aboriginal knowledge and skills at comparable standards. The processes should be culturally appropriate and this is achieved through negotiation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The research reflects the extent to which this 'negotiation' is recognised as an important principle of delivery. This is a process of accommodation to the requirements of the institution by students and *vice versa*, by the institution to the needs of students. The essence of 'two-way' education is this negotiation. By definition, an 'appropriate' cultural relationship in any area - the skills and knowledge of the curriculum, the teaching approach, a mode of course delivery, a form of assessment, the qualities of the teacher - cannot be imposed by the institution.

The learner and institution interviews gave greatest attention to the way that teaching and learning can be culturally responsive through negotiating appropriate practices. The research demonstrated the importance of this principle for delivery in several ways:

- Students appreciate being able to negotiate course requirements with staff when Aboriginal commitments to family and community and work commitments created personal difficulties
- Teachers can draw on the experiences of Aboriginal students, particularly their knowledge of community or work issues, in teaching the subject
- Having Aboriginal staff to teach the course or having non-Aboriginal staff who are selected for their ability to teach in cross-cultural situations.

- Students want more flexibility with subjects and more negotiation of assessment tasks and a variety of tasks. Though many Aboriginal students have had negative school experiences, there is no 'one way' that students want to be taught or assessed.

Clearly *staffing issues* are crucial to flexible and negotiable delivery that is culturally appropriate. The provider interviews indicate the high expectations that Aboriginal students have of their teachers. It found that the qualities of those who work best with Aboriginal students include being supportive, flexible, non-judgemental, patient, humorous, empathetic and open to learning from students, as well as knowledgeable about the subject and Aboriginal culture and history. These qualities underline the requirements for learning to be genuinely 'two-way' that comes through the research.

They also underline how crucial are issues of staff recruitment and professional development within institutions. The institution interviews suggest that in public education institutions, these issues have received considerable attention.

(e) Make relevant language and literacy learning integral to course delivery

The research interviews showed that English language and literacy learning is a high priority for learners and institutions, with these issues being brought up under other headings in the interview. The reasons for the importance placed on English language and literacy include:

- Language and literacy is one area where cultural shifts are keenly felt by participants, in either positive or negative ways.
- English language is essentially the mode of instruction and no matter what the focus of the course is, learning involves learning about language and learning through language.
- Gains in language and literacy are felt to be a vital factor in further and successful participation in VET.

This last point refers not only to the large number of students involved in preparatory or general courses, but in vocational courses where continuing development of academic skills is a goal that students are seeking along with other skills and knowledge.

Some implications of the research are:

- Language and literacy learning should be integrated into course design as well as provided in 'preparatory' courses. The development of academic skills is an integral part of effective delivery at any level.
- Learners should not be shamed by teachers and institutions for using their Aboriginal languages, including Aboriginal English. A balance has to be found between recognising the use of Aboriginal languages in learning and focusing on learning English language and literacy skills.
- Institutions should give more attention to the procedures they use to assess readiness for course entry and what specific English language and literacy skills are

required for success in a course. Entry tasks should be made relevant to the course and their relevance explained

- Good teaching is based on working with learners' experiences and culture while working on English language and literacy learning. Institutions need to perform a balancing act: using mainstream standards but being flexible and working with Aboriginal experiences

- Institutions need to be clear about what the language and literacy requirements of a course are, looking closely at what the demands are and providing specific strategies as a part of effective delivery

- Considering the priority institutions give to language and literacy at entry and in assessment, they need to pay more attention to evaluating both activities and learning strategies in this area

(f) Evaluate the effectiveness of each part of the system of course delivery

The research also suggests that not enough attention has been paid to questions of quality, including the need to evaluate programs and act on the evaluation. The processes of delivery refer, again, not only to the course design, teaching and learning and assessment, but to effective management of course promotion, entry and induction, staffing and professional development and support services. Effectiveness depends on the evaluation of each aspect of the 'system' of delivery, and acting on evaluation to ensure necessary changes are made.

Mechanisms need to be put in place that support the ongoing evaluation of the different parts of the system and this includes the effectiveness of:

- preparatory courses in preparing learners for the next stage in their learning, and

- additional support provided by other units within the institutions, including Aboriginal Study Units, Study Skills Units, and the use of tutors for individual or small group work.

Attending to the 'institutional issues' also implies that effective procedures are best negotiated from experience, making changes to ensure that 'the model works' and outcomes are achieved - for example, in accepting only those students who will really benefit from the course and providing bridging and counselling services to ensure that applicants match demands.

Issues for VET course delivery

The foregoing discussion set out a number of principles that institutions can follow to improve their delivery to indigenous Australians. Each of these principles has relevance for the relationships of the program to the institution, and in turn for the institution's relationships to the indigenous communities.

The effectiveness of the system of course delivery has many implications for the Aboriginal community's perception of the institution. Each aspect of delivery will be perceived

favourably or not in terms of whether it is meeting the kind of concerns outlined in the 'guiding principles'. Obviously, every course will not meet each principle all the time, but any course will be judged in a variety of ways corresponding to these principles.

The interviews clearly indicate that indigenous Australians are prepared for 'trade offs' to access relevant education and training - for example, they will give up time with family and be away from their community in order to attend a residential course that allows them to learn with other Aboriginal people and gain relevant qualifications.

Therefore, it is useful to examine each aspect of the system of course delivery referred to in Figure 7.1 to see how it contributes to positive expectations and enhances the overall quality of the education and training experience:

- *Course promotion* occurs through 'word of mouth' more than any other factor. Therefore, the success with which the institution meets expectations for community involvement, culturally appropriate teaching, flexibility, clear assessment standards and support services, will feed back to the perceptions by the community of the worth of the program and inform their judgments about efforts to promote the course and secure enrolments. Positive outcomes - in terms of student satisfaction - will reinforce the standing of the course in the eyes of indigenous people.

- *Induction.* The first experiences of students, including enrolment, are important for their induction into the culture of the formal education and training institution. The interviews suggested that this is one point where the institution's alienating effects are most keenly felt. Therefore, steps to orient the student are vital.

  It is also apparent from the interviews that the process of learning non-Aboriginal skills and knowledge is an induction into that culture, and one that indigenous people have chosen to experience. Therefore, the course experience itself, as some providers are keenly aware, should be seen in terms of assisting students to gain those skills without an assumption they are being assimilated to it.

- *Course design.* The providers of Aboriginal programs emphasised the involvement of the community in the design of relevant an effective courses, and referred to indigenous organisations, community elders and staff and students. The respondents, learners and co-ordinators alike, often distinguished between Aboriginal content, for example, in Aboriginal Studies as a component of successful courses, to courses where the curriculum content was non-Aboriginal but presented from an Aboriginal perspective.

  A key principle in course design therefore is to provide culturally relevant materials so that the curriculum is 'Aboriginal focussed' in the way it is delivered. This enables students to move between the cultures, relating different knowledges and competencies to each other. Course that do this are likely to be positively perceived as effective in bridging cultures.

- *Teaching-learning relationships (Pedagogy).* The flexibility and cultural responsiveness of teachers was important to learners, and the institution interviews

found that learning was seen to be more effective when it was negotiated, collaborative and experiential.

The interviews emphasised the qualities of teachers, but also suggested that pedagogy that is more learner-centred allows students who may be mature adults to readily bring their experience to the unfamiliar content.

- *Assessment.* It is clear that assessment practices need to be consistent with the emphasis on adapting course design and teaching and learning strategies to take account of indigenous Australians' culture and identity. The research found that learners and providers both believed that there should be choice and flexibility in how learning is assessed and assessment should take Aboriginal ways into account.

- *Support.* A valuable insight from the research is that 'support' refers to a range of measures that need to be taken by institutions. Support can refer to tutoring support, to personal counselling, to study skills courses and to supportive learning and assessment strategies. Support can also refer to the peer learning and culturally affirming experiences enjoyed by indigenous people when they study together. Support from family and community is essential to continuing participation and successful work in the course. Lack of support adds to personal and family hardship.

  Academic support occurs *where staff teach the kind of knowledge and skills required by the assessment*, instead of expecting students to 'take it or leave it' or 'sink or swim'. Study skills can provided both as an adjunct and as an integral part of classroom experiences. Aboriginal support units are highly valued, especially where the student is studying on their own. They are valued not only for their counselling and tutoring support services, but as a place that affirms culture and identity in a more general sense.

- *Staffing.* It was suggested above that staffing and professional development are rightly seen as crucial steps in making course delivery culturally appropriate. Institutions have rightly placed an emphasis on recruitment of indigenous Australian staff to ensure that teaching is carried out by them or by non-Aboriginal staff selected for their cultural sensitivity. The policy of giving preference to Aboriginal people in recruiting staff is widely seen as the most effective way of ensuring that staff can work well with students.

  However, it may be appropriate to recall McDaniel's argument about quality (Chapter 1), and note that if other aspects of course delivery are neglected, burdens are placed on Aboriginal staff that may well threaten their competence. Having indigenous staff is an essential feature of a good delivery system, but is not itself enough to secure quality.

To re-state the theme, course delivery is a complex system of relationships. Each of these aspects of the delivery system and their relationship to each other are, it might be said, risky business. Each needs negotiation by the institution to get it right. The institution, then, will be judged by the community in relation to how well it manages each area.

If the institution does not market the course appropriately, by involving communities, it is unlikely to get students who are committed to it. If entry standards are not clear and realistic for the demands of the course, there will be additional burdens on staff, and if they are indigenous staff, be defeating rather than self-determining for the participants.

If the teaching and learning approaches are not flexible and culturally responsive, course delivery will be negative experience and reinforce perceptions of the culturally hostile nature of the institution, leading to lack of interest and perceived irrelevance in the community. If teaching and learning is not geared towards outcomes, including raising levels of academic knowledge and skills in the course area, and attending to language and literacy issues, there will be few positive outcomes and the reputation of the program and the institution will suffer.

Institution and community: effective models

The research shows that a range of modes of delivery have developed over the years to meet the circumstances and expectations of different indigenous communities and learners. The history and development of programs is parallelled by the stories learners told of their pathways to education and training of learners.

This material illustrates the way that institutions have attempted to respond to the demands by Australia's indigenous people for greater access and equity in education and training. It also says something about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and their diversity. Community is shaped by its location and history, its remoteness, its composition, local employment conditions and so on, as well as by changing government policies on indigenous people (referred to in Chapter Two).

The modes of delivery discussed below reflect an accommodation by institutions to the needs of indigenous people. They are alternatives that may suit some students and some communities and some conditions of life and work better than others.

As discussed the relationship between community and institution is complex and it was beyond the scope of the project to suggest what models best suit certain conditions of participation of Aboriginal people. It has already been suggested that it is not productive to create an ideal model. Again, the conclusion of the research is that any mode of delivery should be closely examined and evaluated by its participants in the terms of the suggested above - is it functioning effectively as a form of course delivery in each of those ways?

However, and by way of conclusion, it is is useful to highlight three modes of delivery that have developed to illustrate how institutions have accommodated the culture and identity of indigenous Australians and to value these forms of institutional adaptation, even as we suggest that each should be evaluated in its own terms.

Block intensive mode

The block intensive mode has become accepted as one way that indigenous Australians can access VET. It is more common in the higher education sector where the institutions are less local than TAFE colleges and specialised courses can only be provided to groups of people

in that way. The block mode of delivery is a response by institutions to the difficulties of indigenous people have in accessing a relevant course, and the recognition by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people that a 'mainstream' education can be accessed in a culturally affirming way through people studying together.

In the block mode, students travel from scattered locations to a central institution to attend a course that may be specifically designed for them, for example, the Diploma in Aboriginal Community Health offered by Curtin University in WA. The course may be a variation of the mainstream program, such as the long-running AREP (Aboriginal Regional Education Program) conducted by UWS Macarthur. The block mode is often the only way that students living in remote communities can access a relevant course, and their entry to the course may be via some form of work. The block may be the only way they can get leave from work to participate in the course. For others, the block mode is a way they can reconcile formal study with work and family commitments.

Finally, students may elect to attend by block mode because it is arguably the most culturally affirming way to participate, since the block mode usually entails an all-Aboriginal group. In this variation, the block mode makes it possible for a group of indigenous students to develop Aboriginal perspectives on the subject matter of the course and to assess its worth and relevance to their needs and community situation. Arguably, the block mode makes an important contribution to the development of Aboriginal policy and practice where it brings together people working in government, community organisations and other settings.

The interviews suggest that the block mode appears to work best where:

- it is the only way a specialised form of education and training can be provided to people who may live in widely scattered communities;
- the existence of an all-Aboriginal group makes it possible to focus on concerns and interests of indigenous people in the area of the course, by developing Aboriginal perspectives and understandings of the skills and knowledge;
- students wish to concentrate their study activities in order to manage work, community and family commitments;
- support services exist to support students study activities when they return to their work or community, for example visits by tutor counsellors;
- assessment tasks can be discussed and worked on during the block to maximise students learning outside the intensive class activity.

Remote delivery

Remote delivery describes a program which is delivered in the home community of the student through study materials, with little or no contact with the institution. The program may build in community support through a study centre, computing or study facilities and provide a tutor serving the area.

The analysis of demographic trends in Chapter Two emphasised the unequal distribution of qualifications and participation between rural and urban areas. This trend has led to remote delivery, where satellite or multimedia technology is used to 'bring' the materials to the student instead of bringing the student to the course. The evaluation by Tranter et al (1994) pointed out that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people favour the provision of courses in the community, rather than away from the community.

The Remote Area Teacher Education Program (RATEP) run by James Cook University and Cairns Institute of TAFE illustrates this model. The program arose out of a desire of communities to ensure that trained indigenous staff stayed in the community after they completed their training. In some cases, students in the program are working as teaching assistants and would have to move to a university to complete their training as primary teachers. Remote delivery allows them to study a for a full teaching qualification while continuing to work in the community. The RATEP program uses interactive multimedia approach based on CD-ROM. The RATEP model is also an example of an integrated TAFE and university program where the first year develops higher levels of language and literacy skills and an introduction to the academic culture. The course is currently very under-resourced compared with the support provided for block release modes of delivery.

The remote model works best where:

- there is full community support for the training and the community is able to provide study facilities;
- there is tutoring available in the community;
- study materials are presented in a way that introduces students to the academic culture, for example, through interactive multimedia approaches;
- where a selection process assesses whether students have a commitment to study and can meet the demands of a remote course.

Full-time study by weekly attendance

In some states, local TAFE colleges and other centres have been active in increasing the participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, especially in the area of general education as an adjunct to entry to further education and training. These courses may sometimes have an all-Aboriginal group and this may account for the perception that TAFE is accommodating of the needs of Aboriginal people (Tranter et al, 1994: 47). They may cater for people who are unemployed, though Tranter et al noted that DEET funding arrangements were discouraging Aboriginal people from continuing to participate in such courses, though lack of language and literacy constitutes the most significant barrier to participation in vocational education and training. A variation of local attendance is where the course is run in the community and training is integrated with employment and enterprise development (for example,Quilliam,1984).

The advantages of full-time study at a local level are:

- People do not have to leave their community to study and support for family members is therefore more likely.
- Courses can be more within the control of the community and made more responsive to its needs and expectations.
- People can have continuity of participation, moving in and out of courses as family circumstances allow.
- A disadvantage may be a lack of tutoring and other support services.

Conclusion

The research has helped to clarify the question of the factors affecting outcomes of participation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students by showing that these factors need to be understood in cultural terms. It is argued that vocational educators need to understand participation in social and cultural terms.

At the same time, the research has stressed that 'cultural issues' can only be most effectively addressed by recognising the complexity of the participation process. It is necessary to see how the whole complex of a complex system of course delivery impacts upon student experiences. Developing the system of course delivery so that it is experienced as affirming Aboriginal culture and identify requires negotiation with learners and communities at each step of the process.

It is in this sense that the research recommends that participation be understood, in a thoroughgoing way, as a cross-cultural process.

The Summary Report summarises a number of recommendations for providers that the researchers believe will assist the improvement of course delivery for indigenous Australians.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

Educational Indicators for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Profile Local Government Areas, Eastern Australia.

Appendix 2

The Learner Interview Schedule

Appendix 3

Summary of Learner Characteristics

Appendix 4

The Institution Interview Schedule

Appendix 5

TAFE Institutions and Universities with highest enrolments of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, 1993

Appendix 6

Summary of Institutions Interviewed

Appendix 7

Examples of Data Management Layouts

Appendix 1

Educational Indicators for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Profile Local Government Areas, Eastern Australia.

Appendix 1

Educational Indicators for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Profile Local Government Areas, Eastern Australia.

(a) Queensland

	Total Persons	ATSI% population	Qualified %	Participating %
Albert (S) - Pt B Bal	108	0.6	29.9	0.0
Atherton (S)	367	3.2	17.7	3.9
Aurukun (S)	698	89.0	4.5	1.2
Balonne (S)	492	9.4	11.7	2.3
Banana (S)	350	2.4	14.0	1.6
Barcaldine (S)	93	5.1	17.2	0.0
Beaudesert (S) Pt B	239	1.1	14.9	5.1
Belyando (S)	180	1.4	17.9	5.4
Booringa (S)	141	6.6	12.4	3.0
Boulia (S)	132	23.2	3.8	0.0
Bowen (S)	514	2.6	14.8	1.0
Broadsound (S)	129	1.2	21.1	3.9
Bundaberg (C)	635	1.8	17.0	5.6
Burdekin (S)	458	1.7	19.3	6.1
Burke (S)	1058	69.2	21.0	0.5
Caboolture (S) - Pt A	578	0.8	18.1	5.2
Cairns (C)	3113	3.4	23.4	7.6
Calliope (S) - Pt A	110	1.2	5.1	4.5
Caloundra (C) - Pt A	201	0.5	22.0	6.0
Cardwell (S)	605	4.8	13.4	1.8
Carpentaria (S)	2016	52.5	32.4	0.5
Charters Towers (C)	509	5.3	9.4	5.2
Chinchilla (S)	83	1.5	14.3	0.0
Cloncurry (S)	698	20.0	14.0	0.0
Cook (S) (excl. Weipa)	2416	36.6	12.5	1.1
Cook (S) - Weipa only	225	4.3	30.4	0.0
Dalby (T)	219	2.3	15.0	10.3
Douglas (S)	833	6.0	15.2	2.1
Duaringa (S)	1192	11.5	9.0	0.8
Eacham (S)	107	1.7	27.4	0.0
Eidsvold (S)	193	18.2	6.5	2.7
Emerald (S)	154	1.3	16.3	7.4
Esk (S)	92	0.7	18.4	0.0
Fitzroy (S) - Pt A	94	2.7	22.6	0.0
Flinders (S)	156	6.3	6.0	2.8
Gayndah (S)	159	4.9	7.0	0.0
Gladstone (C)	636	2.1	15.5	4.0
Herberton (S)	440	8.9	11.2	1.9
Hervey Bay (C)	374	1.1	26.2	9.0
Hinchinbrook (S)	544	3.5	18.4	3.7
Ipswich (C)	1565	2.0	16.1	5.2
Johnstone (S)	1105	4.5	17.5	8.4
Jondaryan (S)	266	2.4	14.5	8.1
Kingaroy (S)	87	0.8	26.7	22.0

Livingstone (S)	294	1.1	23.9	6.4
Longreach (S)	93	1.9	11.5	6.5
Mackay (C)	619	1.4	16.5	4.3
Mareeba (S)	1490	8.2	17.8	3.9
Maroochy (S) - Pt A	442	0.5	18.9	2.4
Maryborough (C)	260	1.0	26.4	6.4
Moreton (S) Bal in BSD - Sth	169	1.3	22.5	6.2
Moreton (S) - Pt B	108	0.9	12.7	0.0
Mornington (S)	572	82.2	9.6	0.0
Mount Isa (C)	2714	10.5	19.1	3.7
Mount Morgan (S)	320	10.0	16.7	1.7
Mulgrave (S) - Pt A	1695	2.2	23.7	4.8
Mulgrave (S) - Pt B	2116	31.0	13.7	1.1
Mundubbera (S)	85	3.3	18.8	0.0
Murgon (S)	1127	25.0	7.3	1.1
Murweh (S)	348	6.5	15.5	1.5
Paroo (S)	504	18.4	9.7	2.9
Pioneer (S) - Pt A	1023	1.6	18.1	5.7
Pioneer (S) - Pt B	125	0.8	16.7	8.7
Redcliffe (C)	462	0.9	25.1	6.0
Redland (S) Bal	242	5.6	28.5	8.7
Rockhampton (C)	1872	2.8	19.0	14.1
Roma (T)	260	4.1	14.2	4.1
Rosalie (S)	94	1.3	13.6	0.0
Sarina (S)	271	1.9	10.8	2.1
Thuringowa (C) - Pt A Bal	406	2.5	18.1	13.7
Thuringowa (C) - Pt B	162	1.4	15.8	6.7
Toowoomba (C)	1214	1.4	14.6	12.4
Torres (S)	6340	8.0	21.1	2.2
Townsville (C) Bal	1875	89.0	15.6	0.8
Warwick (C)	183	1.5	14.4	3.1
Whitsunday (S)	116	0.5	29.6	3.7
Widgee (S)	135	0.7	28.2	0.0
Winton (S)	105	4.2	11.5	0.0
Woongarra (S) - Pt A	194	1.2	16.7	0.0

(b) New South Wales

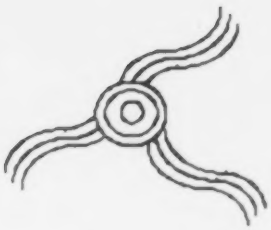
	Total Persons	ATSI % population	Qualified %	Participating %
Albury (C)	461	1.0	20.2	4.6
Armidale (C)	839	3.9	29.4	8.2
Ballina (S)	497	1.6	19.1	5.9
Balranald (S)	112	3.6	27.3	0.0
Bathurst (C)	481	1.7	38.1	8.3
Bega Valley (S)	402	1.4	21.5	3.2
Bellingen (S)	145	1.2	33.8	2.1
Bland (S)	115	1.5	6.2	0.0
Bogan (S)	167	4.8	10.6	1.8
Bourke (S)	1025	22.9	13.9	2.5
Brewarrina (S)	938	41.4	11.1	2.6
Broken Hill (C)	443	1.8	23.1	4.8
Byron (S)	202	0.6	27.4	5.9
Campbelltown (C)	2148	1.4	16.9	2.5
Carrathool (S)	114	3.4	11.1	2.6

Casino (M)	404	3.6	12.7	7.0
Cobar (S)	361	6.6	15.5	3.4
Coonabarabran (S)	436	6.0	17.2	1.4
Coonamble (S)	701	13.5	12.2	1.6
Cootamundra (S)	125	1.3	20.3	2.5
Copmanhurst (S)	123	3.2	13.0	10.6
Cowra (S)	385	3.1	21.1	1.6
Deniliquin(M)	139	1.8	18.6	9.8
Eurobodalla (S)	837	3.0	19.3	3.8
Forbes (S)	179	1.7	16.8	1.7
Gilgandra (S)	372	7.3	25.6	4.5
Glen Innes (M)	136	2.1	20.7	6.5
Great Lakes (S)	395	1.3	20.6	10.1
Gunnedah (S)	730	5.2	18.1	2.3
Guyra (S)	327	6.8	18.6	4.9
Hastings (M)	435	0.8	28.4	8.2
Inverell (S) - Pt A	97	2.1	34.9	0.0
Inverell (S) - Pt B	296	2.7	22.4	2.1
Kempsey (S)	1316	5.1	17.1	6.1
Kyogle (S)	397	4.0	16.5	6.5
Lachlan (S)	622	8.0	18.4	2.6
Lake Macquarie (C)	1721	1.0	22.2	3.8
Leeton (S)	236	2.0	15.9	1.3
Maclean (S)	363	2.4	21.5	5.2
Manilla (S)	92	2.5	16.7	6.3
Moree Plains (S)	2375	13.9	19.5	4.8
Mudgee (S)	131	0.7	24.1	8.7
Murray (S)	154	2.9	28.6	2.0
Murrumbidgee (S)	117	5.2	18.5	0.0
Muswellbrook (S)	275	1.7	27.0	2.2
Nambucca (S)	561	3.3	14.7	4.7
Narrabri (S)	737	4.9	18.0	2.4
Narrandera (S)	444	6.1	16.1	5.0
Narromine (S)	577	8.2	21.2	2.1
Oberon (S)	92	1.6	51.5	3.2
Parkes (S)	424	2.8	16.8	2.8
Parry (S)	250	1.9	16.8	3.6
Port Stephens (S)	602	1.3	23.2	4.0
Quirindi(S)	234	4.5	32.7	8.7
Richmond River (S)	222	2.5	13.4	3.2
Scone (S)	138	1.3	27.8	7.2
Shellharbour (M)	580	1.1	20.9	4.0
Shoalhaven (C)	1518	2.1	19.6	3.9
Singleton (S)	178	0.9	21.6	6.6
Tenterfield (S)	309	4.5	12.4	10.0
Tumut (S)	254	2.0	17.0	4.8
Tweed (S) - Pt A	771	1.5	17.2	2.6
Tweed (S) - Pt B	216	0.6	34.5	6.8
Ulmarra (S)	98	1.6	14.1	6.1
Uralla (S)	142	2.3	25.7	0.0
Walcha (S)	146	3.9	9.7	6.3
Walgett (S)	1502	18.1	16.0	1.0
Warren (S)	323	8.7	14.4	1.8
Warringah (S)	351	0.2	36.1	6.3
Wellington (S)	749	8.0	19.8	5.2
Wentworth (S)	473	6.4	13.9	4.2
Wingecarribee (S)	189	0.5	37.5	7.1
Wollondilly (S)	249	0.7	32.8	4.7
Wyong (S)	984	0.9	22.0	5.5
Yass (S)	110	1.1	22.9	2.7
Young (S)	95	0.7	36.7	0.0

(c) Sydney

	Total Persons	ATSI % population	Qualified %	Participating %
Ashfield (M)	144	0.4	11.7	11.2
Auburn (M)	249	0.6	17.6	5.5
Bankstown (C)	782	0.5	20.2	5.0
Baulkham Hills (S)	177	0.2	26.5	5.9
Blacktown (C)	3250	1.6	9.5	4.2
Botany (M)	334	1.0	9.3	7.6
Burwood (M)	112	0.4	10.8	8.7
Camden (M)	93	0.5	23.7	8.7
Campbelltown (C)	2028	1.6	10.0	2.5
Canterbury (M)	458	0.4	16.9	10.0
Fairfield (C)	1022	0.6	9.9	4.5
Holroyd (C)	456	0.6	12.7	5.5
Hornsby (S)	236	0.2	22.9	5.2
Hurstville (C)	185	0.3	25.4	4.8
Liverpool (C)	1219	1.3	12.5	4.3
Manly (M)	60	0.2	37.7	10.6
Marrickville (M)	790	1.0	12.8	6.0
Parramatta (C)	708	0.6	15.0	6.9
Penrith (C)	1671	1.2	15.1	4.8
Rockdale (M)	256	0.3	24.5	7.9
Ryde (M)	169	0.2	17.8	3.4
South Sydney (C)	1029	1.4	13.8	8.8
Strathfield (M)	85	0.3	17.3	3.5
Sutherland (S)	535	0.3	19.8	9.0
Warringah (S)	326	0.2	20.5	6.3
Waverley (M)	152	0.3	17.2	17.6
Woollahra (M)	74	0.2	32.9	13.8

Appendix 2
The Learner Interview Schedule



Pathways Project

UTS

Factors affecting outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Straits Islander peoples in vocational education and training: A research project funded by the ANTA Research Advisory Council.

Learner Interview

(Thematic)

Name ..... Sex .....

Place of Interview ..... Age Gp .....

Studying at ..... Work .....

Current course .....

Stage in learning .....

Researcher .....

Notes for Interviewers:

- Explain what the research is about
- Explain what information is wanted
- Explain how the information is going to be used
- Talk about privacy, consent and 'report back'
- Explain you are going to make notes
- Go over the steps in the process

  - mapping the journey
  - talking about now
  - talking about past education and training
  - talking about the future

Mapping the journey

Student and interviewer together map out the student's pathway of educational and work experiences that have lead to their current study and that indicate future directions of learning or employment.

Use the large 'Map Sheet'.

Prompts:

Where did you go to school?

When did you leave?
What did you do next?
How long did you stay?
After that?
What's next?

What kinds of courses have you done -

- community
- labour market training
- vocational training
- bridging courses
- language & literacy

What kind of work experiences -

- Aboriginal organisatns
- government programs
- unemployment
- casual work

This pathway is then used as a trigger for further discussion about issues related to this research, including the links between the various courses and student's experiences (positive and negative) re access, enrolment, course design, course delivery and course outcomes.

Choosing your current course

Talk about why the person decided to do the course they are now doing [or the most recent course they did] and what they want to get out of it.

Was there a particular reason?

- personal goals?
- for the community?
- reputation of course?
- advice by teachers?
- advice from community?

Did anyone help you choose the 'right' course?

- friends?
- community person?
- teacher?
- university?

What do want to get out of it right now?

What do want to get from in the future when the course is finished?

- long term goal?
- work or career?
- further study

Was this course your first choice? If not what would you have preferred to study? Why didn't you enrol in that course?

Getting into the course

Lets talk about how you got into the course - what was required and any problems you might have had and what help you had to overcome those problems

What problems?

- attendance
- delivery mode
- child care
- travel- health problems
- family problems

What support services were there to help you?

How did you find out about them?

What **English** language skills or knowledge did you need to get into the course?

To get into the course, did you have to pass any English language and literacy assessment? If so - what were the tests? ...

Was the assessment appropriate to your experience? ... to your Aboriginality? ... to the course?

Did the assessment recognise your Aboriginal language skills?

First impressions of the course

What were the first impressions of the course - what happened at enrolment, what were you expecting, what happened in the first session?

What was enrolment like? What happened to you at enrolment?

Were there any Aboriginal people involved in enrolment? If so, what part did they play?

Were you asked to give information about your cultural background, experience and skills?

Was there any kind of process to take account of your prior experiences

Did you get information about the course before you enrolled?

Did this help you make a decision about what course to do?

At enrolment, did you get more information about the institution and the course?

What about the first class you went to?

Your Aboriginality and the course

Talk about whether the course is designed for Aboriginal and Islander people and whether it recognises their culture and different needs.

Does the course take into account Aboriginal cultural ways and understandings?

How does it do this?

Is the course dealing with difficulties Aboriginal people experience in academic learning?

- your learning needs
- community v individual?
- strange academic system
- academic procedures
- new kinds of writing

Does the course allow for different needs such as attendance problems due to common community, family and personal matters?

Do you feel the course is meeting you needs?
- your personal goals
- your vocational goals
- family expectations
- community expectations?

Talking, reading and writing in the course

Discuss the kind of reading and writing tasks in the course and what kind of language issues come up for Aboriginal people.

Does the course have a specific focus on English language and literacy and the language of learning

Do the teachers and tutors in the course recognise Aboriginal ways of saying things? How?

Before you did this course, did you attend any preparatory English language and literacy courses?

What kind of course was it? And did this course prepare you for the course entry requirements? How?

Is there help with study skills provided at the university?

Support and Help

In this section explore the kind of help and support that is provided for students and how they can access it.

Is there tutorial support e.g. through a tutor or counsellor. making Abstudy arrangements

Are student support systems part of the course design? e.g.
study skills

What would you like to see included in courses to assist your learning e.g.

- orientation to the course
- flexibility of learning
- literacy support
- student support systems
- assessment tasks that
- attendance patterns?

What happens in the classroom?

How do you attend the course once a week, in week-long blocks? Does this mode suit your learning needs and learning style?

If not, what mode of delivery best suits your learning needs and style?

Pace of the course: is there a lot of content that is covered very quickly - or not much content, that doesn't seem to develop very far?

Depth/breadth of the course: is there enough to challenge you?

The teaching activities - do they draw on your experience?

Have you had any say in the learning activities offered?

If not, how would you like to change it?

What about your relationship with the teaching staff?

- support offered
- time to discuss work
- time for personal issues
- meeting your learning needs?

How is learning assessed?

How is your learning assessed and does the feedback help your learning?

What kinds of assessment tasks are used in your course?

- type of tasks
- spoken and/or written
- use of Aboriginal languages
- appropriate to learning style

- negotiable assessment
- kind of feedback provided
- flexibility in due dates?

Do the assessment tasks and the feedback from these tasks assist in your learning?

Are the criteria used to assess your work made clear to you?

Are there difficulties you have with academic writing?

Can you suggest any changes to the assessment processes that would make them more appropriate and constructive?

Are there more culturally sensitive ways of assessing learning?

What are you getting from the course?

How has this course affected you -
as a person,
- as a family member,
- as a community member?

Are your learning outcomes recorded in a form that you can use at work or in other ways?

How do the learning outcomes match up with your expectations?

- your personal goals
- community's expectations?
- employment needs?
- career needs?

Has the course helped prepare you for other courses?

Reviewing the pathway

The interview questions are finished.
It is useful to talk about what was said in the interview.

Report back the themes.
Interviewer reports back what the person seemed to be saying in the interview.

There may be other things that come up in this time that you will need to note - the person may just becoming aware of these.

Draw out general issues - persons overall view of their experience in following a pathway.

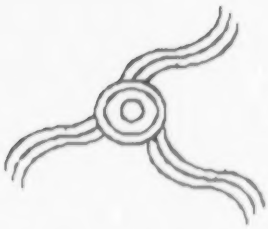
Appendix 3
Summary of Learner Characteristics

Appendix:
Student Characteristics

Name	Current course	Type	Age	Employed	State
Kerry*	Bachelor of Teaching	UNI	35	Yes	NSW
Alice	CAFE	TAFE	44	Unemployed	NSW
Amy	CAFE	TAFE	30	Unemployed	NSW
Ada	Diploma in Community Management	UNI	36	Unemployed	NSW
Mavis*	Bachelor of Teaching	UNI	23	Yes	NSW
Betty	Diploma in Social Welfare	UNI	37	Yes	NSW
Arthur	Diploma in Community Management	UNI	35	Yes	NSW
Bob	Dip Teaching, Primary	UNI	25	Unemployed	NSW
Billy	Bachelor of Adult Education	UNI	51	Yes	NSW
Bert	Tertiary Preparation	TAFE	32	Unemployed	NSW
Cliff	Management Certificate	TAFE	52	Yes	NSW
Clare	Management Certificate	TAFE	43	Yes	NSW
Charlie	CABE	TAFE	54	Unemployed	NSW
Col	Minor Building Maintenance	TAFE	27	Unemployed	NSW
Carol	Parks and Garden Trade	TAFE	15	Yes	NSW
Bridget	Bachelor of Education	UNI	56	Unemployed	NSW
Celia	Bachelor of Adult Education	UNI	40	Unemployed	NSW
Debbie	Aboriginal Art Course	TAFE		Unemployed	NSW
Dave	Advanced Certificate - Accounting	TAFE		Yes	NSW
Dick	Pre Tertiary Vocational	TAFE		Student	Qld
Frank	Bachelor of Communications	UNI		Student	Qld
Ellen	Bachelor of Education	UNI	51	Student	Qld
Greg	Master of Education with Honours	UNI	41	Yes	Qld
Ida	Health and Behavioural Science	UNI	20	Student	Qld
Jenny	Pre-Tertiary Vocation	UNI		Student	Qld
Jill	Bachelor of Adult Education (Aboriginal)	UNI	47		Qld
Jack	Bachelor of Adult and Workplace Education	UNI	27		Qld
May	Associate Diploma of Business Administration	TAFE	36	Yes	Qld
Malcolm	Pre-Tertiary Vocational	TAFE	21	Student	Qld
Mary	Aboriginal Tertiary Access Course (ATAC)	UNI	21	Unemployed	NSW
Melanie	Bachelor of Arts (Welfare Studies) - AREP	UNI	37	Unemployed	NSW
Nathan	BA Welfare Studies in AREP mode	UNI	31	Yes	NSW

Name	Current course	Course	Age	Employed	State
Mick	Aboriginal Vocational Preparation	TAFE	37	Yes	NSW
Noelene	Bachelor of Education	UNI	35	Yes	NSW
Paul	Bachelor of Music	UNI	37	Unemployed	NSW
Peter	BA Social Science	UNI	43	Unemployed	NSW
Nellie	Masters in Arts (Creative Writing)	UNI		Yes	NSW
Noni	Bachelor of Nursing	UNI	25	Unemployed	NSW
Parry	ATAC - Aboriginal Tertiary Preparation Course	UNI	28	Unemployed	NSW
Regina	Aboriginal Way of Counselling Certificate	UNI	35	Yes	WA
Ray	Aboriginal Studies	TAFE	55	Student	WA
Rita	Aboriginal Community Development	UNI	45	Unemployed	WA
Raylene	Post Graduate Studies	UNI	38	Yes	WA
Ruth	Bachelor of Education	UNI	45	Yes	WA
Roma	Foundation II Certificate	TAFE	49	Student	WA
Richard	Not stated	TAFE	36	Student	SA
Rose	Bachelor of Arts	UNI	26	Yes	WA
Sam	Aboriginal Health - Mental Health	UNI	51	Yes	WA
Sandra	Counselling in Mental Health Diploma	UNI	52	Yes	WA
Sally	Registered Nursing Training Diploma	UNI	35	Unemployed	WA
Sid	Higher Education Course Certificate	TAFE	45	Student	WA
Stewart	Community Development and Management	UNI	35	Yes	WA
Shirley	Aboriginal Community Administration	TAFE	65	Student	SA
Steve	Community Management	UNI	43	Yes	WA
Trevor	General Education for Adults	TAFE	18	Student	WA
Tony	Certificate of General Education	TAFE	17	Student	WA
Teresa	Traineeship - Administration Dept. Justice and	UNI		Yes	
Terri	Bachelor Adult Education - Teaching	UNI		Yes	
Tracey	Year 10 Certificate	TAFE		No	
Tom	Ancilliary Care Certificate	Com		No	
William	Associated Dip Business ATS Administration	TAFE		Yes	
Trish	No course	-		Yes	
Wally	Assoc. Diploma in Occupational Health and	TAFE		Yes	
Wilma	*Not completed (Bachelor of Business)	UNI		Yes	
Anne	Bachelor of Education (Deferred)			Yes	

Appendix 4
The Institution Interview Schedule



Pathways Project

U T S

Factors affecting outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Straits Islander peoples in vocational education and training A research project funded by the ANTA Research Advisory Council.

Institution Interview

September 1995

Institution:

Course name (from Page 3)

Date of interview

Contact person

Phone

Fax

Postal address:

Follow-up Contact:

Phone

Fax

Introducing the research

Say to the person:

Hello. I am ..... from the UTS School of Adult Education.
I'm ringing about some research we are doing on the participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in education and training - we are looking at what factors affect outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

We would like to interview people over the phone who are co-ordinating a program, teaching, developing materials or providing support to ATSI students.

The interview will explore issues such as access and enrolment, cultural appropriateness of course design and delivery and outcomes for learners. We are also interested in the language and literacy issues.

The person we want to interview should -

- be Aboriginal or TSI
- be knowledgeable about the program

In another part of the project Aboriginal researchers are doing interviews with learners about the pathways they follow in education and training. Now we want to talk to institutions about their point of view on these issues.

All questions are about a program that specifically designed for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students or delivered to them as a class group. A program is a whole course of study, for example, an Associate Diploma in Community Health

At the end of the interview, ask the person to **send you any documents about the program**. This course documentation can include -

- course information booklets,
- publicity brochures
- subject outlines including assessment

Section A
History and Background

To begin the interview we want to get some idea of the history and background of the course.

A1 How did the course COME ABOUT in the first place? Why was it was SET UP?

Prompt: What is the story of this course ... its history.

If this person does not know, then ask for the NAME of someone who can. Decide whether to end the interview.

A2 What are some of the MAIN REASONS that Aboriginal and Islander people do this course?

A3 What is the main MODE OF DELIVERY?

Attendance each week	☐ 01
Block of week or fortnight	☐ 02
Open learning/distance	☐ 03
Other	☐ 04

A4 How do Aboriginal and Islander people FIND OUT ABOUT the course ?

Prompt: Is it by recommendation from the community members? Aboriginal teaching or support staff? From other students?
How is information communicated Brochures ? [ASK FOR COPY]

A5 How has the TRAINING REFORM AGENDA affected the course?

Prompt: competency based training and assessment - emphasis on employment outcomes - flexible provision - links between different parts of the VET system -

Section B
Experience of entry to the course

In this section we would like to explore how students get access to the course, its entry requirements and so on.

B1 First we would like to go through a CHECKLIST about some of the ENTRY REQUIREMENTS for the course

(a) Do students need HSC or matriculation to get into the course?

Yes ☐ 01
No ☐ 02

(b) Do students have to IDENTIFY as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander?

Yes ☐ 01
No ☐ 02

(c) Do students need to have relevant WORK OR COMMUNITY EXPERIENCE?

Yes ☐ 01
No ☐ 02

(d) Do students need to have done a PREPARATORY COURSE such as Adult Basic Education?

Yes ☐ 01
No ☐ 02

(e) Do students need a specific level of ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERACY skills?

Yes ☐ 01
No ☐ 02

(f) Do students need to have specific TECHNICAL KNOWLEDGE and skills

Yes ☐ 01
No ☐ 02

(g) Can students APPLY FOR CREDIT for existing knowledge and skills?

Yes ☐ 01
No ☐ 02

B2 What FACTORS have influenced the criteria used to assess whether a student is SUITABLE for entry? What do you do if a student is not suitable?

B3 What are some of the DIFFICULTIES ATSI students have because of their UNFAMILIARITY with your institution or the course ? What kind of SUPPORT does the course offer to overcome these problems?

Prompt: e.g. bureaucratic procedures regarding results, extensions of time.

B4 What kind of SUPPORT SERVICES have you found to be MOST EFFECTIVE in overcoming any problems Aboriginal and Islander people have in adjusting to the course?

Prompt: tutor counselling, tutoring,
Aboriginal tutors and teachers

Section C
Aboriginal Culture and Community

In this section we want to explore how the course has adjusted to the Aboriginal culture and the kind of input Aboriginal people and the community have .

C1 What kind of INPUT have Aboriginal and TSI people had into the course

Prompt: AECG and community people are involved
Aboriginal staff teach on the program

C2 What do you see as some of the MAIN POINTS to be considered in designing a program so that it meets the needs of Aboriginal people?

Prompt: so that culture is taken into account

C3 What are some of the PRESSURES you have had to DEAL WITH in running an Aboriginal program?

Prompt: pressures to meet employers needs
pressures to use competency based training
pressures to meet the needs of communities

C4 From your perspective in your institution, whose NEEDS is this course meeting, generally speaking?

Prompt: The needs of employers - of individual students - the community? Is it a course for specific employment or is it more general ?

C5 What do you think are the QUALITIES of teachers who can work effectively with ATSI students?

Prompt: what do Aboriginal students most value about teachers in the course?

C6 What are the main KINDS OF ASSESSMENT used in the course?

	One or more
written examinations at end of semester, term or year	☐ 01
group assignments and project work	☐ 02
spoken and oral presentations	☐ 03
learning contracts negotiated with the student	☐ 04
set assignments and essays	☐ 05
laboratory or field work	☐ 06

C7 What are the MAIN REASONS for using these assessment methods with students?

C8 Is it possible for students to BRING ABORIGINAL CULTURE and IDENTITY into their ASSESSMENT? Can you give an example?

Prompt: can students to negotiate their assessment to do this?

C9 Are there some CLASSROOM STRATEGIES you have found to be successful in helping Aboriginal and Islander students master assessment tasks?

C10 How do staff deal with typical STUDENT DIFFICULTIES such as lateness of assignments or absence due to family or personal commitments?

C11 What steps does the institution take to make sure that STAFF of the course can work effectively with ATSI students? Are there difficulties in staffing the course?

Prompt: What professional development is there for non-ATSI staff?
What is the policy on recruiting Aboriginal and TSI staff?

Section D
Language and literacy

We'd like to focus now on language & literacy issues.

D1 Do students need a particular LEVEL of language/literacy to do the course? If so how is this assessed?

D2 What kind of PREPARATORY COURSES have students attended before coming into the course? Are these courses helpful? If so in what way?

Prompts: helps them to reach the literacy standard that is required - helps with course reading and writing tasks, increases confidence.

D3 What do teachers DO to help students to master ACADEMIC READING AND WRITING tasks?

Prompt: such as essay writing, reading texts, finding information

D4 Are ABORIGINAL LANGUAGES including Aboriginal English used in the classroom? If so, how are they used?

Prompts: teachers use Aboriginal English as a 'translation' tool to make link s between academic and everyday knowledge - teachers contrast languages, and the different ways language can be used.

D5 How IMPORTANT do people (staff, students) think it is to DEVELOP SKILLS in English language or literacy? For example, through specific learning activities?

Prompt: Do they feel it is an important outcome of the course? Are there specific learning activities on language/literacy skills?

Section E
Outcomes of the program

E1 What are the MAIN LEARNING OUTCOMES achieved through this course?

Prompt: main impact of the learning on students

E2 What are students LIKELY TO DO when they have finished the course?

prompt: what further education courses
employment opportunities

E3 Can you tell me about the ATTRITION RATE in the course? What are the REASONS that some students DO NOT COMPLETE the course?

Prompt: % of those enrolled in the course complete the course

E4 What CHANGES would you LIKE TO SEE in the course to make it more appropriate and constructive for Aboriginal and Islander students?

E5 Given that the report of this research will be making recommendations about BETTER MODELS for programs .....

How would you describe a VET program that would work the most effectively for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students?

Prompt: Thinking about things we have discussed through this interview - like access to the course, including language and literacy issues - Enrolment issues - Course design - delivery .- assessment.

Section F
Background Information

F1 Are you an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander?

F2 What is your position in the institution?

Director, Aboriginal Education Centre/Unit/Program	☐ 01
Co-ordinator of the course or Aboriginal program	☐ 02
Teaching staff (Aboriginal)	☐ 03
Teaching staff (Non-Aboriginal)	☐ 04
Support staff (Aboriginal)	☐ 05
Support staff (Non-Aboriginal)	☐ 06
Co-ordinator of the unit or the program	☐ 07

F3 How many years have you worked in education? ..... ☐

82 Are you ..... Male ☐ ..... Female ☐

THANK YOU VERY MUCH for giving your time to this interview.

Would like a copy of the draft report? We would be pleased to send it to you and have your feedback on how we have reported the interviews with you and others.

Appendix 5
TAFE Institutions and Universities with highest enrolments of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, 1993

Appendix

Education and Training Providers With Large Enrolments of Indigenous Australians

(a) Training Providers with the largest enrolments of Aboriginal and Torres Straits Islander students in 1994, by state (largest providers only, by state)

Canberra Institute if TAFE (ACT)	185
Open Training & Education Network (NEW South Wales)	538
Sydney Institute of Technology - Petersham	519
North Coast institute of TAFE - Kempsey	453
Western Institute of TAFE - Broken Hill	443
Western Institute of TAFE - Bourke	439
Western Institute of TAFE - Dubbo	422
New England Institute of TAFE - Moree	413
Western Sydney Institute of TAFE - Mt Druitt	338
Riverina Institute of TAFE - Albury	264
North Coast Institute of TAFE - Grafton	260
Northern Territory University (Northern Territory)	851
Open College - Alice Springs	633
Batchelor College	520
Open College - East Arnhem	314
Cairns College of TAFE (Queensland)	1638
Kangaroo Point College of TAFE	669
Townsville College of TAFE	601
Rockhampton College of TAFE	539
Johnstone College of TAFE	504
Ipswich College of TAFE	362
Mt Isa College of TAFE	347
South Burnett College of TAFE	255
Mackay College of TAFE	241
Toowoomba College of TAFE	171
Aboriginal Education (TAFE South Australia)	1194
Port Augusta	473
Regency Park	240
Ceduna	165
North-West Institute of TAFE (Tasmania)	194
Hobart Institute of TAFE	162
Launceston Institute of TAFE	131
Coburg (Victoria)	174
Mildura	163
Fryers Street	153
Preston	112
TAFE External Studies College (Western Australia)	468
Thornlie Campus (S.E.M.C. TAFE)	335
Midlands Regional College of TAFE	256
Hedland College	205
South-West Regional College	196

University College of Kalgoorlie	176
Karratha College - Main Campus	135
Pundulmurra College - Main Campus	130
Balga Campus (N.M.C. TAFE)	107

(b) Universities with the largest Aboriginal and Torres Straits Islander programs: All enrolments, 1994, (by state)

Charles Sturt University (New South Wales)	346
Macquarie University	198
Southern Cross University	135
University of New England	153
University of Newcastle	206
University of Sydney	179
University of Technology, Sydney	226
University of Western Sydney	305
Deakin University (Victoria)	181
Monash University	221
Central Queensland University (Queensland)	185
Griffith University	190
James Cook University of Nth Queensland	366
Queensland University of Technology	226
University of Queensland	159
University of Southern Queensland	154
Curtin University of Technology (Western Australia)	390
Edith Cowan University	328
University of Western Australia	118
University of Adelaide	144
University of South Australia	462
University of Tasmania	162
Batchelor College, Northern Territory	692
Northern Territory University	205
Australian Catholic University (Multi-State)	140

Appendix 6
Summary of Institutions Interviewed

Providers Interviewed in Institutions

No	Type	State	ATSI	Position in Institution*	Type of Course
1	uni	WA	YES	Co-ordinator	vocational degree course
2	uni	SA	NO	Support Staff	foundation bridging course
3	uni	WA	YES	Co-ordinator	vocational degree course
4	uni	WA	YES	Director	univversity bridging & orientation course
5	uni	WA	YES	Director	university bridging and orientation course
6	TAFE	WA	YES	Co-ordinator	educational and vocational certificate courses
7	Ind	WA	YES	Manager of Division	certificate bridging course
8	TAFE	SA	YES	Support staff	various vocational certificate courses
9	TAFE	SA	YES	Teaching staff	various vocational certificate courses
10	Ind	WA	YES	Support staff	foundation bridging courses
11	TAFE	SA	YES	Coordinator	Introduction to VET course
12	TAFE	WA	YES	Co-ordinator	various educational and vocational certificate courses
13	Uni	WA	YES	Co-ordinator	various educational and vocational courses
14	TAFE	NSW	YES	Co-ordinator	foundation bridging certificate course
15	Uni	SA	YES	Director	university bridging and orientation course
16	uni	SA	NO	Teaching staff	vocational degree course
17	TAFE	NSW	NO	Teaching staff	vocational certificate and diploma courses
18	uni	WA	NO	Co-ordinator	foundation vocational course
19	TAFE	NSW	YES	Co-ordinator	foundation bridging certificate course
20	TAFE	SA	YES	Teaching staff	vocational certificate course
21	TAFE	NSW	YES	Co-ordinator	educational certificate course
22	Uni	SA	YES	Support staff	vocational advanced certificate course
23	TAFE	NSW	1 = NO 2 = YES	Co-ordinators	foundation bridging certificate course
24	TAFE	NSW	YES	Co-ordinator	vocational certificate course
25	Uni	WA	YES	Co-ordinator	university bridging and orientation course
26	TAFE	NSW	NO	Co-ordinator	vocational preparation course

27	TAFE	WA	NO	Co-ordinator	educational/ vocational certificate course
28	TAFE	WA	NO	Co-ordinator	foundation bridging certificate course
29	Uni	NSW	YES	Teaching staff	university bridging and orientation course
30	Uni	NSW	YES	Director	university bridging and orientation cours
31	Uni	NSW	YES	Co-ordinator and Support staff	university bridging and orientation course
32	Uni	NSW	YES	Co-ordinator	educational diploma course -
33	Uni	NSW	YES	Co-ordinator	vocational diploma course
34	Uni	NSW	YES	Director	educational diploma course
35	Uni	NSW	YES	Support Staff	university bridging and orientation cours
36	TAFE	SA	YES	Co-ordinator	various educational and vocational bridging courses
37	Uni	NSW	YES	Director	vocational bridging and orientation course
38	Uni	NSW	YES	Director	university bridgingand orientation course
39	TAFE	QLD	YES	support officer	vocational bridging certificate course
40	Uni	QLD	-	not specified	university bridging courses
41	TAFE	QLD	NO	not specified	university bridging course
42	Uni	QLD	NO	not specified	university bridging and orientation course
43	TAFE	QLD	NO	not specified	vocational certificate course
45	TAFE	QLD	YES	Teaching staff	vocational certificate course
46	Ind	NSW	YES	Co-ordinator	university bridging and orientation course
47	TAFE	QLD	YES	Co-ordinator	educational certificate course
48	Uni	QLD	YES	Support Staff	vocational degree course

* All of these positions are located in Aboriginal programs and units.

Appendix 7
Examples of Data Management Layouts

Institutions Interviewed

NSW	EORA Centre	Certificate of Adult Foundation Education and CAGE
NSW	Open Training & Education Network	Environmental Managers Course
NSW	Western Sydney Institute of TAFE.	Certificate in Adult Foundation Education
NSW	Western Institute of TAFE, Bourke	Certificate of General Education
NSW	North Coast Institute of TAFE	Certificate of Adult Foundation Education
NSW	New England Institute of TAFE.	Health and Recreation cert
NSW	Western Institute of TAFE	Aboriginal Vocational Preparation
NSW	University of Western Sydney.	Aboriginal Tertiary Access Course
NSW	University of Western Sydney	Aboriginal Unistart (bridging)
NSW	Charles Sturt University	ADEPT (Aboriginal Distance Education Preparatory
NSW	University of Newcastle	Diploma Aboriginal Studies
NSW	Sydney University	Aboriginal Education Assistant Program
NSW	Australian Catholic University	Assoc Diploma in Aboriginal Education
NSW	Southern Cross University	Tertiary Foundation Certificate
NSW	Macquarie University	Rural Aboriginal Pograms bridging
NSW	University of New England	TRACKS (Bridging Course)
NSW	Tranby College	Tertiary Preparation Certificate
Qld	Townsville TAFE (Pimlico)	Vocational Preparation certificate
Qld	Qld University of Technology	Support Services
Qld	Rockhamptom College TAFE Qld	Certificate of Tertiary Education
Qld	University of Southern Qld	Preparatory studies
Qld	Kangaroo Point TAFE Southbank	Business Studies Certificate
Qld	Cairns College TAFE	Early Childhood Certificate
Qld	Townsville College TAFE	Basic Education certificate
Qld	James Cook University	Remote Area Teacher Education Program
SA	University of Adelaide	Foundation Bridging Course
SA	Adelaide Institute of TAFE	Arid Lands Horticulture Certificate/Aboriginal Primary
SA	South East Institute of TAFE.	Small Business Skills Course/Horticulture - Study
SA	Port Adelaide Campus - Western	Certificate Introductory Vocational Education
SA	Yunggorendi Centre	University bridging course
SA	University of South Australia	Bachelor of Arts Aboriginal Studies
SA	Spencer Institute of TAFE	Certificate in Office Skills
SA	University of South Australia	Advanced Certificate in Community Development
SA	Tayondi College	Various Certificate Courses
WA	Curtin University	Associate Degree in Aboriginal Community Management
WA	Curtin University	Associate Degree in Indigenous Community Health, BA
WA	University of Western Australia	Orientation Course
WA	Edith Cowan University	Aboriginal University Orientation Course
WA	Onkaparinga Institute of TAFE	Various Certificate programs

Appendix
Institutions Interviewed

WA	Pundulmarra College	Certificate in Access and Further Studies
WA	Clontarf Aboriginal College	Secondary curriuculum
WA	Thornlie TAFE	Certificate of General Education for Adults, NOW, other
WA	Murdoch University	Several programs offered
WA	University of Notre Dame Australia	Clerical Foundation Certificate
WA	Curtin University	Aboriginal Bridging Course
WA	Kalgoorlie College	Aboriginal Women Stepping Out Certificate
WA	Midland College of TAFE	Certificate of General Education

Appendix 7

Examples of Data Management Layouts

466 Sam Change to caring profession in late life

Sam is nearly sixty. He grew up in the north-west where he went to Catholic schools including two years in a Christian Brothers college, leaving at 16 and entering a carpentry apprenticeship. He qualified and worked for more than twenty years in the pearling industry . He then got involved with the Aboriginal Visitors Scheme (visiting Aboriginal prisoners in gaols) and a new counselling and support service that grew out of this scheme, running counselling workshops. He then started a university bridging course and was then accepted into a degree course in Aboriginal health by block release at Curtin University, which he feels will equip him to work with his people especially in the area of mental health. (, Sam, 466)

476 Sandra Mature age entry after long working life

Sandra's experience is that of a number of older men and women who in later life devote their energies into working with their own communities, worjk that brings themto enter formal vocational education and training. Sandra attended Catholic schools in northwest , leaving at about 13 years of age. She did it hard in hotels, the meatworks and as a domestic, as she says 'There was 'no fuckin' CDEP in them days, we had to work!' She then moved to Perth 'so her children could get an education', staying there and working as a nursing assistant for many years. At 40 she returned to the northwest and worked for several years in alcohol rehabilitation doing workshops and counselling and then for some years in Aboriginal women's refuges. In 1994, at the about fifty, she begaan her university course in counselling.

486 Sally Bridging to a new career - drop out

Sally attended various while being in and out of a Catholic orphanage and foster homes. She was expelled from school in her second or third year of high school but after moving once or twice more, left finally at 17 years of age. The next ten years are unclear but include periods of causal work and unemployment. She considered the bridging course run by Curtin University, thinking of entering nursing. This she passed with distinctions. She felt a strong personal goal to 'work with my own people', but also felt that she needed a qualification and also 'wanted to be someone special'. She stuck at the nursing course for two years, but it was away from home and proved to be 'too much too fast' and she dropped out. She then got married and had children.

496 Sid Mature age after lifetime of unskilled work

Sid grew up in the northwest of Australia and later moved to where he finished his secondary schooling before leaving at about 15. He describes his working life for thirty years as 'casual work on and off' including root grubbing and grape picking and other labouring. At fifty years of age he started a course at TAFE at about the same time he became an ATSIC councillor for his region. being involved with Aboriginal organisation like ATSIC, he felt it was time to 'get my education' and pick up his education where he had left off, get a certificate and work his way to higher studies. He also felt it was important to be a role model for his children.

Pathways

Learner Interviews

Topic Analysis

13 June 1996

No 4		05 Your Aboriginality		Kerry*	
x	Bachelor of Teaching		Australian Catholic Uni, Yalbalinga		NSW
	older	Yes			

Yes, Language and Arts allows us to use Aboriginal English. They remind us that we'll be teaching other kids as well and we have to use proper English as well. They like us to put Aboriginal perspectives into everything.// I don't know.// We're helping them to understand the needs of Aboriginal students with regards to things like attendance at funerals, and personal family business, which always comes first.// It's meeting my needs - but nobody else's. My family hates it.

No 14		05 Your Aboriginality		Alice	
x	CAFE		TAFE		NSW
	older	Unemployed			

We do Aboriginal Studies essays on where you were born and things out of books.// They help us to write things. For example - an essay - how to start - full stops and commas. After that you pick it up yourself.// Yes, like I said before. You just have to let them know.// At this moment it's meeting my needs. I love sitting down and doing maths - and English is good. It's not too heavy - just something light. Sometimes I get bored with the electives.

No 24		05 Your Aboriginality		Amy	
x	CAFE		TAFE		NSW
	young	Unemployed			

We started out dong Ab Studies with ____, then we went to electives. I chose computers and hospitality, plus we had compulsory maths and English. Some of the work covers Aboriginal issues.// We have a happy sort of relaxed place to go. We feel comfortable to go there.// If you have to take your family to the doctor or somewhere, the teacher lets you do that.// Yeah, but I want more - like we do maths everyday - I'd rather learn different things - things what are going on in the world. Something else - a couple of days is all right, but everyday you get sick of it. They should have more variety.

No 40		05 Your Aboriginality		Ada	
x	Diploma in Community Management		University		NSW
	older	Unemployed			

I don't reckon our lecturer understands - she can't teach Aboriginal people. She's a good teacher for others but - she's English. You don't know what she wants.// I reckon the maths course could have been different. It wasn't relevant. We should have done basic maths.//If someone dies or something and you can't come, you can get someone else's notes - as long as you get your assignments in. But you can get extensions. They let me go a couple of days early for my trip to NT and WA.// I wanted to learn all that stuff - letter writing, submissions - and that's what I'm doing.

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